

SLOVAKIA



Published By
**THE SLOVAK LEAGUE
OF AMERICA**

SLOVAKIA

VOLUME XXXVII

2003

NUMBERS 68-69

A scholarly annual devoted to the history, literature,
and culture of the Slovaks the world over.

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Slovak League of America

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Passaic, NJ 07055, USA

Inquiries regarding subscriptions should be sent to the above address.

The cost of a single issue is U.S. \$10.00

Manuscripts for possible publication and books for review should be sent to

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Table of Contents

ARTICLES

The Slovak Question in the Interwar (1918-1938) and Post-War (1945-1948) Czechoslovak Republics <i>James R. Felak</i>	7
Slovák som a Slovák budem: Explaining Nationalism in Post-Communist Slovakia <i>Paal Sigurd Hilde</i>	28
Reversing the Trend: Central Europe from Dictatorship to Democracy <i>Ján Čarnogurský</i>	57
Trends in 20th Century Slovak Filmmaking <i>Martin Votruba</i>	71

DOCUMENTATION

Sketches from a Slovak Catholic Parish in Pittston, PA [1900] <i>Matúš Jankola</i>	101
Konštantín Čulen's Long Journey from Italy to Canada as Illustrated by His Correspondence with Juraj Rondoš <i>Susumu Nagayo</i>	112
The Political, Economic, and Cultural Situation in the Slovak Republic (As of May, 1995) <i>M. Mark Stolarik</i>	172

REVIEWS

Stephen L. Crane, *Survivor from an Unknown War: The Life of Isakjan Narzikul*

Vladimír Baumgarten.....201

Konstantin V. Lifanov, *Jazyk duchovnoj literatury slovackich katolikov 16-18 vv. i kodifikacija A. Bernolaka.*

Martin Votruba204

Contributors.....208

Guidelines for Manuscripts.....210

ARTICLES

The Slovak Question in the Interwar (1918-1938) and Post-War (1945-1948) Czechoslovak Republics

James R. Felak

A key element of the aura of tragedy that surrounds Czechoslovakia's history in the eyes of many of its students, observers, and sympathizers is that state's experience in having its liberal, Western-oriented, parliamentary democratic, pluralistic political system destroyed by a powerful, aggressive, neighboring totalitarian empire twice in this century. In the early fall of 1938, threatened by Hitler's Germany, abandoned by their allies, and facing pressure from discontented ethnic minorities at home, Czechoslovakia's leaders succumbed to the Munich Agreement and dismantled their parliamentary democratic regime, the last one remaining in East Central Europe, and replaced it with a quasi-authoritarian alternative. In February 1948, a restored multi-party democracy in Czechoslovakia once again met its end, this time through the machinations of a pro-Soviet Communist minority that was able to seize power and thereafter transform Czechoslovakia into a carbon-copy of the Stalinist "people's democracies" that had been imposed over the previous years on most of the countries of the region. In the periods that concluded with the demise of both of these experiments in liberal democracy, the relations, and particularly the tensions between Slovaks and Czechs

played an important role. This paper will examine the state of Slovak-Czech relations in both the inter-war, and post-war Republics, arguing that the obstacles to a mutually satisfactory solution to the Slovak question were formidable in both situations. It will also draw comparisons between the two cases, identifying elements of continuity and change.

The events of autumn 1918, with the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire and proclamation of an independent Czechoslovak Republic, brought Czechs and Slovaks together in a single state. Slovak discontent became apparent from very early on. It was inevitable that Czechs would dominate the new Republic. Czechs outnumbered Slovaks by more than two-to-one, and the Czech lands were much more highly developed economically than Slovakia. Czechs had large middle and working classes, and had acquired considerable political and administrative experience in the Austrian half of the Empire. By 1900, they were a well-organized, well-educated, confident nation with a strong sense of national identity. This was in stark contrast to relatively poor, largely rural Slovakia, where discriminatory Hungarian policies had kept Slovaks from acquiring much political or administrative experience or educating themselves in a Slovak national spirit. As the twentieth century dawned on Slovakia, Slovak nationalists were only just beginning to build a mass national movement.

The new regime, both in its structure and its justification, carried the seeds of Slovak discontent. First, Czechoslovakia was based on the idea that a Czechoslovak nation existed, which served as the so-called constituent nation (*štátotvorný národ*) upon which the Republic was based.¹ This notion was anchored in

¹ See Ladislav Lipscher, *Verfassung und politische Verwaltung in der Tschechoslowakei 1918-1939* (Munich, 1979), pp. 41-42 for a discussion of the *štátotvorný* concept.

the Czechoslovak Constitution of 1920, along with the belief that a Czechoslovak language existed and would serve as the Republic's official language.² These stipulations, while freeing the Slovaks from Magyarization, denied them one of the major goals of the Slovak national movement since its inception at the time of Ľudovít Štúr in the 1830s and 40—the recognition that a distinct Slovak nation in fact existed. In hand with the Czechoslovak idea went a centralistic administrative structure for the new state, with decision-making powers concentrated in the central government in Prague, which was situated in the heart of the Czech lands. Aside from being a corollary to the idea that the state was based on a single Czechoslovak nation, it reflected fears among Czechs and a number of Czech-oriented Slovaks that autonomy for Slovakia would set a precedent for similar demands by the German and Hungarian minorities and aid Hungary's efforts to ultimately detach Slovakia from Czechoslovakia and return it to Budapest's control. As Czechoslovakia's then Foreign Minister Edvard Beneš said in 1932, greater autonomy for Slovakia would “mean for this state the slogan Slovakia to the Slovaks, German regions to the Germans, Magyar regions to the Magyars.”³ There was also a strong anti-Catholic sentiment among Czech elites and some of their Slovak collaborators, manifested in a fear that if

² The Constitution opens with the words, “We, the Czechoslovak nation,” and goes on to stipulate that “The Czechoslovak language shall be the state, official language of the Republic.” For an English translation of the Constitution, see Howard Lee McBain and Lindsay Rogers, Eds., *The New Constitutions of Europe* (New York, 1922), pp. 307–342.

³ Quoted in Carol Skalník Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia; The Making and Remaking of a State, 1918–1987* (Princeton, NJ, 1988), p. 137.

Slovaks governed themselves, they would choose a government that was too reactionary and clerical for the progressive tastes shared by most of Czechoslovakia's founding fathers. Finally, there was a widespread belief that, blighted by Magyarization, Slovaks were not yet capable of self-government.

Two further issues that served to fuel Slovak discontent were the economy and religion. Along with the damage done by the First World War, Slovaks now had to cope with a new international boundary that, among other things, cut them off from the traditional markets, resources, and outlets for surplus labor that they had enjoyed in the larger Austro-Hungarian economic unit. Furthermore, the industry that Slovakia did have, lost the subsidies that the Hungarian government had been providing and had to compete with the more efficient and more heavily capitalized industry of the Czech lands. The result was an economic depression and, in effect, a de-industrialization of Slovakia during the early 1920s. The tax rate was also higher in Slovakia than in the Czech lands during the 1920s.⁴

Religion proved to be a major irritant in Slovak-Czech relations. Many Czech nationalists, drawing inspiration from the Husite tradition and regarding Catholicism as a reactionary historical force identified with German-Austrian hegemony over the Czech lands, viewed the Roman Catholic Church with suspicion and even outright hostility. This was dramatically demonstrated shortly after Czechoslovakia achieved her independence, when a Czech

⁴ See C. A. Macartney, *Hungary and Her Successors, The Treaty of Trianon and Its Consequences 1919-1937* (London, 1937), pp. 127-131 and R. W. Seton-Watson, *Slovakia Then and Now: A Political Survey* (London, 1931), pp. 36-37, for contemporary discussions of Slovakia's economic problems. Despite their divergent interpretations of the Slovak question, Macartney's and Seton-Watson's characterizations of Slovakia's economic plight are quite similar.

mob smashed to pieces the statue of the Virgin Mary on Old Town Square in Prague. Reports of this renunciation of a part of the Bohemian past did not play well in Slovakia, where among Slovaks such hostility toward the Church was considerably weaker, if operative at all. The forced removal of crucifixes from the walls of schools, disruption of religious services and desecration of sacred places and objects, and state seizure of Catholic schools and church lands helped foster in Slovakia the image of the Czech as an enemy of Christianity, especially as traditionally understood in Slovakia.⁵ Also contributing to religious tensions was the fact that Czech political elites had, already before 1918, developed their closest relations with members of Slovakia's Protestant (Lutheran) minority. Slovak Protestants had traditional links with Czech culture, and were more likely than Slovak Catholics to share the modernist world view that was standard among Czechoslovakia's founders. By way of example, of the fifty-seven Slovaks appointed to the Provisional National Assembly that was established to draw up Czechoslovakia's constitution, twenty-eight were Protestants. This in a land that was approximately 79 per cent Catholic.⁶ Such an outcome could hardly fail to appear discriminatory and unrepresentative to many Slovaks.

One final irritant in Slovak-Czech relations is worth discussing at some length, as it shows just how complicated this relationship could be. This is the question of the migration of Czech administrators, teachers, and other professionals and government employ-

⁵ Jozef Špirko, *Cirkevné dejiny s osobitným zreteľom na vývin cirkevných dejín Slovenska*, sv. IV (Bratislava, 1993), p. 466; see E. L. Woodward and Rohan Butler, Eds., *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939*, First Series, Vol. IV, 1919 (London, 1956), p. 3, for a reference to anti-Catholic actions in Slovakia in a report by the British Chargé d'affaires in Prague.

⁶ Ladislav Lipscher, "Klub slovenských poslancov v rokoch 1918-1920," *Historický časopis*, XVI, 2 (1968), pp. 140-141.

yees to Slovakia after 1918. Slovakia lacked qualified professionals and administrators who were untainted by affiliation with the former Hungarian regime and its education system, given the fact that Slovaks before 1918 could rarely advance socially and professionally except by becoming "Magyarized." For this reason, tens of thousands of Czechs moved to Slovakia in the 1920s.⁷ Though many of them were needed, their presence in Slovakia proved to be a major cause of Slovak discontent. First, they represented a cultural intrusion of modern-thinking, largely urban progressive types into a traditional, rural society, and as such offended many Slovaks with paternalism and tactlessness. Second, they received considerable salary supplements since Slovakia was regarded as a hardship post.⁸ This income disparity between imported Czechs and native Slovak employees was also a sore point. Third, there was a perception among Slovaks that their native land was being used by Czechs as a dumping ground for officials who were second-rate. Finally, Slovak resentment was especially acute over the fact that among the Czechs who received employment in Slovakia were not only professionals and high-level administrators, but railway porters, postmen, doormen, messengers, and janitors, positions for which there were plenty of capable Slovaks at hand.⁹

This situation can be explained at least in part by the nature of Czechoslovakia's political system. In Czechoslovakia's coalition

⁷ See Jan Rychlík, *Češi a Slováci ve 20.století; česko-slovenské vztahy 1914-1945* (Bratislava, 1997), pp. 86-87 for statistics on the number of Czechs employed in Slovakia during the interwar period.

⁸ Nataša Krajčovičová, "K otázke personálneho obsadzovania orgánov štátnej a verejnej správy na Slovensku v prvých rokoch po vzniku ČSR", *Historický časopis*, XLIV, 4, 1996, pp. 619-620.

⁹ Jozef Lettrich, *History of Modern Slovakia* (New York, 1955), pp. 61-62; Seton-Watson, *Slovakia*, p. 34.

governments, certain parties tended to retain particular ministries over the long-term. Thus, it was not unusual for a political party, whose support came almost exclusively from the Czech lands, to control a substantial number of state administrative positions in Slovakia which it would allot to its Czech adherents as patronage. Such was the case, for example, with the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party and the railroads. Compounding the problem of Czech employment in Slovakia was the fact that Prague, with the help of these migrants, was so successful in developing a Czechoslovak education system in Slovakia that by the end of the 1920s, Slovakia was producing for the first time a native intelligentsia fully trained in Czechoslovak high schools and colleges. Unfortunately, precisely at the time that these cohorts of educated Slovaks were coming onto the job market, Czechoslovakia was hit by the Great Depression. These young Slovaks, many of whom could not find appropriate employment, came to resent the fact that Czechs were working in Slovakia in positions that they coveted. Many of these Czechs meanwhile had struck roots in Slovakia and, even if they wished, had little to return to in Depression-stricken Bohemia and Moravia. Many of these members of the young Slovak intelligentsia inclined toward radical politics of the left and right; among the latter, calls for Czechs to go home became standard fare at political rallies. Though, as one scholar recently pointed out, the personnel question was an extremely complicated issue that cannot be understood from a purely ethnic standpoint, the fact that Czechs were working in Slovakia while Slovaks were unemployed provided grist for Slovak nationalist mills and made this issue a constant irritant for Slovak-Czech relations.¹⁰

¹⁰ Krajčovičová, "K otázke", pp. 627, 628.

Politically, Slovaks responded to this growing discontent in a number of ways. The antidote to Czechoslovak centralism was Slovak autonomy, a call that was embraced by the Slovak party with the greatest popularity, the Slovak People's Party (SPP). Led by the populist priest Andrej Hlinka, it sought to mobilize Slovak religious, economic, political and cultural discontent into a broad-based movement for autonomy and national recognition. It staunchly supported an autonomous Slovakia right up to the end of the First Republic. Two other groups also called for autonomy for Slovakia, at least in their rhetoric—the Communists and the parties of the Hungarian minority. This meant that in the parliamentary elections of 1925, 1929, and 1935, over 50% of voters in Slovakia opted for parties that rejected Czechoslovak centralism.¹¹ While about half of ethnic Slovaks voted for the SPP, most other Slovaks voted for the Slovak affiliates of Czechoslovak-wide parties. These parties supported the idea of a Czechoslovak nation and the centralist system. Because they were always or nearly always in the government, they could provide supporters with certain material advantages that the SPP could not, so it was quite likely that considerably more Slovaks supported autonomy than voted for the autonomist SPP. The most significant of such parties was the Agrarians, which alone among the government parties had a strong Slovak wing, led by Milan Hodža. Though officially accepting the Czechoslovak idea and opposing autonomy for Slovakia, the Agrarians tried in the 1930s to develop an alternative to both Prague centralism and SPP autonomism—the so-called regionalist option. This involved promoting cooperation of Slovaks on behalf of Slovak interests on regional rather than national grounds. In theory, regionalism gave the Slovak Agra-

¹¹ For electoral statistics, see Leff, *National Conflict*, p. 52.

rians the possibility to champion Slovak interests without the sort of nationalism that could upset Prague and the Czechoslovak constitutional order.¹²

Despite considerable support for autonomy in Slovakia throughout the inter-war period, the cards were stacked against success in this regard for a number of reasons. Some of these have been discussed above and need little further elaboration—the Czech numerical preponderance over Slovaks, and superiority in terms of modern economic, cultural, and political development; the constitutional stipulation that a Czechoslovak nation, rather than separate Czech and Slovak nations, existed and was the basis of the state; the distaste for traditional Catholicism among the Republic's ruling elites; the fears that autonomy for Slovakia would play into the hands of Hungarian and German nationalists and make it harder for Prague to resist their autonomist demands; the belief that Slovaks were not capable of governing themselves; and the difficulties, owing to problems of political patronage and economic stagnation, of finding appropriate employment for the university-educated Slovaks the system was producing by the late 1920s and their consequent turn towards radicalism.

Other factors were at play as well. It should be kept in mind that both of Czechoslovakia's presidents during the inter-war period, Tomáš G. Masaryk and Edvard Beneš, were staunch champions of the Czechoslovak idea and opponents of autonomy for Slovakia. Furthermore, the autonomist forces in Slovakia were not united, and in fact were fundamentally divided over their conceptions of just what sort of autonomous Slovakia they wanted. The Hungarian parties regarded Slovaks and Hungarians as minorities with an equal claim to self-government in Slovakia,

¹² M. Kropilák, ed., *Dejiny Slovenska, V (1918-1945)* (Bratislava, 1985), p. 195.

with hopes that someday that territory would return to a restored Kingdom of Hungary. The SPP, on the other hand, believed in "Slovakia for the Slovaks," as one of its most cherished slogans rang out, and saw Slovaks as the *štátnotvorný národ* in Slovakia, with Hungarians as merely a minority. The Communists, for their part, were open to autonomy for Slovakia only if it were to come in conjunction with the establishment of a Communist dictatorship of the proletariat, something that repelled the other pro-autonomy parties.

The nature of the Czechoslovak political system was particularly crucial in making it highly unlikely that the SPP, barring some sort of exceptional circumstances, would be able to realize its autonomist goals via normal political channels. While winning the votes of around half of the ethnic Slovaks, the SPP's support statewide was only around 7%. This meant that it would have to find allies if it wished to establish influence in or increase pressure on the government. Such alliance-seeking was problematic, however. Several leading Czechoslovak parties were outright hostile to Slovak nationalism and the idea of autonomy, for example the Social Democratic Party, National Socialist Party, and, after 1921, the Czechoslovak People's Party. Taken together, these three parties represented a considerable proportion of the governing majority.¹³ Among the opposition parties were a few that were open to cooperation with the SPP, such as the Hungarian nationalists, Czech fascists, and the Slovak National Party (a Protestant autonomist party), but they were either insignificant in numbers and influence, or holding fundamentally different ultimate goals from the SPP. The Slovak wing of the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party, the second strongest electoral draw in Slovakia, could theoretic-

¹³ For example, of the government's 206 seats in Parliament after the 1929 elections, these three parties held 96 seats.

cally have formed a powerful bloc had its regionalist program developed into a genuine political collaboration with the SPP. However, two factors—the Agrarians' fear that the SPP would dominate an autonomous Slovakia, and the fact that the Agrarian Party's leadership in Prague was unwilling to abandon centralism—kept such collaboration at a minimum.

As with many national conflicts, it was probably the vicious circle of fear that accounted most for the failure to solve the Slovak question satisfactorily. In the 1920s, Czechoslovak centralists feared that an autonomous Slovakia would be easy prey for Hungarians eager to revise the post-War peace treaties and detach Slovakia from the Czech lands and return it to Hungary. The close collaboration after 1918 between SPP leader Hlinka and two notorious Hungarian sympathizers, František Jehlička and Vojtech Tuka, only heightened Prague's apprehensions.¹⁴ By the mid-1930s, the Germans had replaced the Hungarians as the chief fear of Czechoslovak centralists with respect to Slovakia. After Konrad Henlein's strong showing in the 1935 parliamentary elections, Prague worried that autonomy for Slovakia would make it harder to resist similar demands by Czechoslovakia's Sudeten German minority. The SPP, at the same time, had a great fear that Czechs would solve the Sudeten German question by granting autonomy to the predominately and historically German lands, while ignoring similar demands from Slovaks. This fear, combined with the

¹⁴ Jehlička was a Slovak priest of pro-Hungarian sympathy who accompanied Hlinka on a trip to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, where they sought to present the Slovak national case to the Great Powers. After the trip, which proved to be a fiasco, Hlinka was imprisoned by the Czechoslovak government while Jehlička went into exile; Tuka was a pro-Hungarian university professor who lost his job after 1918 and found a new career in the SPP as an editor, parliamentarian, and advisor to Hlinka. He was involved in various intrigues against the Czechoslovak Republic in the 1920s.

SPP's inability to realize its demands via normal channels, led that party, or at least certain factions within it, to seek support repeatedly from abroad. And since the Western democracies tended to support the post-War status quo, the SPP sometimes looked to those neighbors of Czechoslovakia who were seeking change and, hence, were seen by the Republic's rulers as a threat. Hlinka and his party consistently cultivated good relations with official and unofficial circles in Poland, while SPP radicals sought closer ties with Germany and Czechoslovakia's pro-Nazi Sudeten Germans.¹⁵ This in turn frightened Czechs and made it even less likely that autonomy for Slovakia would be agreed to by the power brokers in Prague.

Throughout 1938, fears on both sides increased as German pressure, both from within and without Czechoslovakia, intensified, as did Slovak demands for autonomy. Once the Czechoslovak government elected to accept the Munich Agreement and hand over large tracts of its territory to Nazi Germany, the SPP pressed its claims and got a demoralized Czechoslovak government not only to acquiesce in its autonomist demands but also to accept the existence of a distinct Slovak nation. Scarcely a week after the Munich Agreement, Prague and the SPP agreed that Czechoslovakia would be restructured as Czecho-Slovakia, with an autonomous Slovakia run by the SPP.

When Hitler opted to destroy Czecho-Slovakia in March of 1939, this autonomous Slovakia became the independent Slovak Republic, closely allied with Nazi Germany as one of its satellites, while the Czech lands were incorporated wholly into the Third Reich as the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Slovakia

¹⁵ See, for example, James Ramon Felak, *"At the Price of the Republic": Hlinka's Slovak People's Party 1929-1938* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1994), pp. 171-175, for a discussion of SPP flirtations with Polish and German nationalists.

survived the war as an authoritarian, one-party state, led by the Roman Catholic priest Jozef Tiso, who succeeded Hlinka in the summer of 1938 as head of the SPP. Both Roman Catholics and their Church were privileged in this period. At the same time, a resistance movement emerged composed of an uneasy alliance of Communists and democrats, which erupted in the Slovak National Uprising of August-September 1944. Both the Slovak Republic and the Uprising would have major impacts on the post-War situation in Slovakia.

First, by having their own state, Slovaks gained the confidence and experience necessary for self-government. By 1945, the idea of returning to a Czechoslovak nation and state run from Prague was repellent across the political spectrum in Slovakia. Second, the very fact of this state which, like the autonomous Slovakia of October 1938, came into existence on the coattails of Hitler's march into Central Europe, tainted Slovak accomplishments, as many Czechs regarded Slovaks, especially those in the SPP, as collaborators with the Czechs' mortal enemy, Nazi Germany. Thus, Czechs often saw manifestations of Slovak nationalism as fascist in nature and threatening to the Republic. Third, despite the susceptibility of Slovaks to charges of collaboration, at the same time, thanks to the Slovak National Uprising, Slovaks could point to the fact that their own homegrown resistance to Nazism far exceeded Czech efforts in numbers and intensity. It also created a politically influential association of partisan veterans who could potentially throw their weight around in the post-War situation.

With Germany's defeat, Czechoslovakia was restored. This time, however, there would be no Czechoslovak idea. Slovaks were recognized as a distinct nation, and allowed to retain the Slovak national organs that they had set up during the Uprising.

Czech Communist leader Klement Gottwald, Czechoslovakia's most powerful politician at war's end, proclaimed that "the Slovaks are to be the masters in their own Slovak land."¹⁶ A whole host of problems emerged however, some almost at once, to foil what was a hopeful beginning for advocates of Slovak autonomy. First, the set-up was an asymmetrical one. Slovak national organs, such as the Slovak National Council and Board of Commissioners, were established, but with no parallel Czech organs, only federal organs with competence for the entire state. This led to conflicts over where the competence of the central organs ended and that of the Slovak ones began. The "Slovak question" returned in a new form. Second, the cultural differences that plagued Slovak-Czech relations during the First Republic continued. Czech suspicion of Slovak Catholicism was, if anything, even more intense after the experience of the Second World War, when the pro-Nazi Slovak state was led by a Catholic priest under whom the Church enjoyed far more privilege and influence than it had under the First Republic or could hope to after 1945. Third, Czech numerical dominance remained, and if Czech parties could be united on the issue, they would be able to scale back Slovak self-government with little resistance. It also became clear, especially after Czechoslovakia's first post-war parliamentary elections in May of 1946, that Slovakia was far less friendly politically to the Left than were the Czech lands. While Czechs chose left-wing parties in percentages that rank among all-time highs for Europe (the Communists, Social Democrats, and National Socialists together received over 79% of the vote in the Czech lands, with the Communists leading the way with 40%), Slovaks rejected the Com-

¹⁶ Joseph A. Mikuš, ed., *Slovakia, A Political and Constitutional History*, *Acta Academica Slovaca* 48 (Bratislava, 1995), p. 242; this work contains an English translation of the text of the Košice Agreement of April 5, 1945, pp. 242-243.

munists in favor of the Democrats by a slightly more than two-to-one margin.¹⁷

These above factors combined to complicate post-war Czechoslovak politics and to pose formidable impediments to the realization of the promised program of autonomy for Slovakia. The political landscape in Slovakia after the War was occupied by three main groups, politically speaking. On the Left were the Communists, belonging to the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS), separate from, yet ultimately under the control of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSČ) in Prague. The KSS was divided between those Slovak Communists who were willing to assert what they regarded as Slovak interests, and those who were more closely under the thumb of Prague. By August 1945 the latter, on Prague's intervention, were given the upper hand in the KSS.¹⁸ The only significant party besides the Communists was the Slovak Democratic Party (DP), founded by non-Communist veterans of the Slovak National Uprising, attracting above all those Slovak Protestants who had been alienated by the SPP's assertive Catholicism but at the same time suspicious of Prague's centralism. The third group was the Catholics themselves, most of whom were unorganized politically with the outlawing of the SPP at war's end. Thus, the party that traditionally drew about half the Slovak vote no longer existed, and a land that was 80% Catholic was offered only parties dominated by atheists or Protestants. This large bloc of voters without a party home would, as both the Communists and the Democrats realized, be decisive in the parlia-

¹⁷ Róbert Letz, *Slovensko v rokoch 1945-1948 na ceste ku komunistickej totalite* (Bratislava, 1994), p. 39.

¹⁸ Lubomír Lipták, ed., *Politické strany na Slovensku, 1860-1989* (Bratislava, - 1992), pp. 267-268; and Yeshayahu Jelinek, *The Lust for Power: Nationalism, Slovakia, and the Communists, 1918-1948* (Boulder, CO, 1983), p. 86.

mentary elections. Thus, the KSS began to woo Slovak Catholics, hoping to create a separate Slovak Catholic party that would keep Catholic voters away from the DP and thereby keep Slovakia's non-Communist population divided.¹⁹

Just as it appeared that Communist intrigues would succeed, the DP delivered an olive branch to disgruntled Slovak Catholics. It was called the April Agreement, and involved the DP and leading Slovak Catholics. This Agreement specified that the ratio of Catholics to Protestants in all DP organs and institutions was to be seven-to-three, with Catholics to be allotted two-thirds of the party's seats in Parliament. In addition, Catholics were to get their own DP daily, the *Demokratické hlasy*.²⁰ As a result of the April Agreement, Catholics moved into leading positions in the DP's presidium and general secretariat.

Nevertheless, this Catholic-Protestant reconciliation was a Pyrrhic victory for Slovakia's non-Communist forces. It did enable the DP to win the May 1946 parliamentary elections in a resounding manner, and made it clear that Slovakia was overwhelmingly anti-Communist. At the same time, however, the Communists were able to exploit the April Agreement successfully for their own ends. With an influx of Catholics into the DP, the same Catholics that Communists had been wooing up to that point, the KSS now sought to portray the DP as riddled with fascist traitors loyal to former leader Tiso, and dangerous to the integrity and democracy of the Czechoslovak state.²¹ Thus began a determined,

¹⁹ Letz, *Slovensko*, pp. 28-29; Michal Barnovský, *Na ceste k monopolu moci; Mocenskopolitické zápasy na Slovensku v rokoch 1945-1948* (Bratislava, 1993), p. 73.

²⁰ Barnovský, *Na ceste*, p. 80; Letz, *Slovensko*, p. 36.

²¹ See United States Department of State, Decimal Files, 860f.00/6-1346, no. 985; (hereafter referred to as DOS).

sustained, and aggressive effort by Communist propaganda to slander the DP. Furthermore, the election results made it clear to the Communists that autonomy for Slovakia would be a disaster for Communist interests. Consequently, the Communists began to push aggressively for a scaling back of the competence of Slovak national organs in favor of federal ones. At the same time, Communists sought to use the alarm they could generate over a "fascist restoration" in Slovakia to frighten Czech non-Communists into keeping the DP at a distance. With the acquiescence, and at times the support of the Czech democratic parties, the Communists succeeded in reasserting Prague's control over Slovakia and largely isolating the DP. As U.S. Ambassador Laurence Steinhardt wrote in May, 1947:

For the Czech non-Communist parties and their leaders, including Beneš, as a result of their experiences in 1938-1939 when Slovak aspirations contributed materially to the dissolution of the Czechoslovak State, feel with a deep intensity that Slovak autonomy, while acceptable in theory, must have definite limitations in practice. These leaders are therefore all too likely to side with the Communists on any issues to which the latter are able to give a Czech versus Slovak or autonomy versus centralism complexion. As a result the Democrats are very frequently left to face the Communist onslaught alone.²²

Although, strictly speaking, Czechoslovakia was a democracy, with free elections and multiple political parties with their own periodicals, one is struck by just how circumscribed the system in fact was. A number of political parties were banned, including the most popular Czech and Slovak parties of the inter-war years, the Agrarians and SPP, respectively. New parties were prohibited

²² DOS, 5-2947, no. 2477.

without the consent of the existing parties. Nor could one set up an individual periodical without their permission. Government intervention in and influence over the media was considerable, and publication of anything critical of the Soviet Union was taboo. The regime was also established to accord the Communists more influence than electoral results would warrant.²³ This was particularly the case in Slovakia, where despite losing by nearly a two-to-one margin in the parliamentary elections, the Communists retained the chairmanship of the Board of Commissioners, which acted as the executive branch in Slovakia, and kept the Democrats from holding the crucial post of Commissioner of the Interior, which went to the non-partisan Mikuláš Ferjenčík.²⁴

Without much support from the Czech non-Communist parties and facing a Communist-influenced political police, the DP was an easy prey for the most concentrated Communist attack yet. In June of 1947, the security police in Slovakia uncovered an alleged “anti-state conspiracy”, which the Communists used to blackmail and intimidate the DP.²⁵ Using their influence in and control over state security organs and employing ‘agents provocateurs’, the Communists were able, reminiscent of their assault on the Smallholders Party in Hungary, to charge leading Slovak Democrats with complicity in the conspiracy. Though the Czech democratic parties were by this time wise to Communist intrigues and took some steps in defense of the DP, they never quite lost their suspicions that, just possibly, Communist charges against the

²³ For a discussion of Czechoslovakia’s “people’s democratic” system, see Karel Kaplan, *The Short March; The Communist Takeover in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1948* (London, 1987), pp. 33-54.

²⁴ Barnovský, *Na ceste*, pp. 116-117.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141; Letz, *Slovensko*, pp. 54-55.

DP might be accurate.²⁶ With the Czech democrats thereby paralyzed, the Communists, with the police in their pockets, and the trade union and partisan organizations that they dominated mobilized on their behalf, felt that the correlation of forces were such in Slovakia that they attempted a 'putsch' in November of 1947. This involved a KSS attempt to force a reconstitution of the Slovak Board of Commissioners through a political crisis caused by the planned and coordinated resignation of its Communist members. Though only partly successful, and though the DP and Czech non-Marxist parties stuck together from this point on, this cooperation proved to be too little, too late. The attempted coup in Slovakia was followed by a successful one in Prague in February 1948; in the latter case, it was the Czechoslovak Social Democrats who broke ranks with Czechoslovakia's democratic parties and allowed the Communists' divide and rule tactics to bring Czechoslovak democracy to an end.

In contrasting the inter-war period and the post-war period, one finds much continuity in the Slovak-Czech relationship. The Czech bias against traditional Slovak Catholicism impeded relations both after 1918 and, reinforced by the events of 1938-1945, maintained itself into the post-war era. Czech fears of Slovaks as disloyal also continued, again reinforced by the events of the inter-war period and especially of 1938-1939, and made evident in the ease with which the Communists could find Czech support for their efforts to undo 'de facto' the results of the elections in Slovakia. Both situations, though in quite different ways, presented insurmountable obstacles to the realization of Slovak autonomist desires, with Slovaks themselves divided over the issue, unable to bring sufficient pressure to bear on their behalf. Finally, in both

²⁶ DOS, 10-647, no. 1342; see also Hubert Ripka, *Czechoslovakia Enslaved: The Story of the Communist Coup d'Etat* (London, 1950), p. 113.

situations, external developments were crucial—in one case Nazi Germany's pressure against Czechoslovakia, in the other the intensifying Cold War, which made Czechoslovakia's hopes of being a bridge between East and West futile and even dangerous.

Along with important similarities, the Slovak question in the inter-war period and post-war period shows significant differences. After World War II, the Czechoslovak idea was abandoned and the existence of a Slovak nation was officially recognized. Furthermore, Prague came to believe that the best way to ease Slovak discontent was via the economic development of Slovakia. There were also important differences in the political structure of the two cases. In the inter-war period, the Government was composed of parties committed to the maintenance of Czechoslovak democracy, with Communists and fascists in the opposition along with Slovak nationalists. After the War, an opposition technically ceased to exist, Communists held key positions within the system they sought to destroy, and Slovak nationalists, albeit a new breed more moderate than the former SPP, sat in the Government.

A final crucial difference lies in the relationship between the Slovak question and the health and survival of the democratic order in Czechoslovakia. In the inter-war period, Slovak nationalists had at best an ambivalent attitude toward Czechoslovakia's system. While a fascist element within the SPP viewed it with hostility, most Slovak nationalists accepted the system or were indifferent toward it. When Czechoslovakia faced potentially fatal threats in 1938, the SPP's primary concern was not "How can we defend Czechoslovak democracy at this critical time?" but rather the more parochial "What's in it for the Slovaks?" For all their failure to address satisfactorily the Slovak question in the 1920s and 1930s, most Czech political elites had a better grasp of just what was at stake as Nazism intensified its pressure on the First

Republic from within and without. After the war, however, autonomy-minded Slovaks, now represented in the DP, had a very clear notion of just what was at stake, and arguably a better grasp of the situation than the Czechoslovak democrats, who well into 1947 seemed to fear an SPP-revival in Slovakia more than they feared the Communists.

For national tensions to ease, both sides of a conflict need to relinquish, or at least moderate, their fears of the other. This the Czechs never really succeeded in doing, as the idea that Slovakia was disloyal and separatist was always in the back, and often in the front, of the minds of many of them. Slovak actions, whether it was Hlinka's consorting with Hungarian sympathizers in the 1920s, the SPP radical wing's flirting with fascism in the 1930s, or the SPP's demand for autonomy and eventual secession from Czecho-Slovakia in conjunction with Hitler's penetration of East Central Europe, only reaffirmed or deepened Czech fears. When one takes into account these mutual suspicions, the psychological baggage both sides brought into their relationship, the structure of Czechoslovakia's regimes during this century, the persistent bias of Czech elites against Slovak Catholicism, the disparities between Slovak and Czech economic development, the presence of hostile neighbors hoping to exploit Slovak-Czech tensions, and the trauma that this part of Europe experienced from 1914 to 1989, it is not surprising that the Slovak question remained a running sore on Czechoslovakia's body politic throughout the twentieth century.

‘Slovák som a Slovák budem...’¹

Explaining Nationalism in Post-Communist Slovakia

Paal Sigurd Hilde

The question of the position of Slovakia within the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic (ČSFR), the official name as of April 1990, was among the most divisive issues in Slovak and Czech politics in the post-communist era. As is well known, the conflict over the future basis and structure of the federation eventually led to the division of the state on 1 January 1993. Despite the impression given by many press reports at the time, the break-up was not the result of Slovak secession. With the exception of the Slovak National Party (SNS), representing about 10 per cent of the votes in Slovakia, all Slovak political parties successful in the decisive June 1992 elections were in favor of some kind of common state with the Czechs. This included the winner, Vladimír Mečiar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS). There were, however, near irreconcilable policy differences between the left-populist HZDS and the right wing coalition victorious in the Czech Republic. Given the minority veto in the Federal assembly, whereby a minority of representatives from either Republic could block important legislation in the House of Nations, only a carefully crafted compromise could save the Federation from political deadlock. Rather than seeking a compromise, however, the Czech

¹ The title is taken from Miroslav Kusý's 1981 samizdat essay. Reprinted in Miroslav Kusý: *Eseje* (Bratislava: Archa, 1991), pp. 88-96.

right wing coalition led by Václav Klaus of the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) pushed for the division of the state if a 'functional federation' was not possible. Unwilling and politically unable to accept Klaus's vision of a strong federal government, Mečiar reluctantly followed the Czech Prime Minister's lead towards a break-up.²

The political phenomenon generally referred to as Slovak nationalism was thus not the decisive force behind the break-up of the ČSFR.³ It was, however, Slovak nationalism that after the collapse of communism started the process that eventually led to the rejection of the common state by right-wing Czech parties. As all nationalisms, Slovak post-communist nationalism was a complex phenomenon. It came in moderate and more radical forms, focussing on several political issues. In its most basic expression, it held that Slovakia and the Slovaks deserved a more equal and visible position within a state seen as unfairly dominated by the Czech part.⁴ Basically all Slovak political parties, including the

² On the process preceding the break-up see Eric Stein: *Czecho/Slovakia: Ethnic Conflict, Constitutional Fissure, Negotiated Breakup* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

³ Nationalism is for the purpose of this study defined as a world view, which holds that the population of the world is divided into nations. A nation, claim nationalists, consists of a group of people identifiable and identifying according to cultural, religious, historical and/or territorial criteria. Nationalists see nations as constituting natural social units and seek to promote the political, cultural, economic or other kind of status, in symbolical or more material terms, of the nation they claim to represent. The nationalist discourse, common to all forms of nationalism, is used throughout the world, most often to oppose or defend existing political units. See Craig Calhoun: *Nationalism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997).

⁴ For an examination of mainstream Slovak nationalism see Paal Sigurd Hilde: 'Slovak Nationalism and the Break-Up of Czechoslovakia', *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 51 (1999), no. 4, pp. 647-665.

most pro-federal, shared this demand. More radical expressions called not only for more radical solutions to the question of the Federation, but focussed also negatively on the position of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia and the perceived threat from Hungarian irredentism. In its extreme, which was promoted only by small, popular unrepresentative groups, Slovak nationalism promoted radically anti-Czech, anti-Hungarian and sometimes also anti-Semitic views.

This article will analyse another complexity of nationalism in post-communist Slovakia.⁵ As with all nationalisms, the popular success of the Slovak form can be seen as a result of several, intricate causes. These include historical, political, social and economic determinants. The aim of this study is not to reach a final decision on what caused the appearance and success of post-communist nationalism. Rather, the article offers an overview of a range of possible explanations and the strengths and weaknesses of these. This might be a combination of all, some, just one or none.

Ultimately, it was Slovak⁶ politicians and other political actors that gave nationalism the political significance it had after the collapse of communism. Without nationalists, there is no nationalism. Focusing merely on the role of actors, however, leaves many unanswered questions. The most important of these is why the demands and rhetoric of the nationalists gained such a favourable response from the population. Certain political factors in the post-communist period can be seen to have facilitated the success of the nationalist agenda among Slovaks. One such factor was the

⁵ For the sake of simplifying the analysis the multi-issue complexity of Slovak nationalism will be not discussed in detail.

⁶ The word Slovak will in this article denote a person of Slovak culture and identity. Similarly, a Czechoslovak is a person of Czech or Slovak ethnicity with a Czechoslovak identity.

institutional legacy of the socialist federation (more on this below). A second factor was the changing international environment after the Cold War, with the secession of the Baltic states, Slovenia and Croatia as examples of the new stress on national self-determination. Interaction with the two major 'others', the Hungarians and Czechs, was also important. The upsurge of post-communist nationalism in the Hungarian speaking minority in Slovakia and in Hungary, and the increasingly hostile attacks on Slovak nationalism, particularly in the Czech press, both served to spur Slovak nationalists into action.⁷

Even more important in increasing support for nationalist demands in post-communist Slovakia was the issue of economic reform. The generally harder impact of the Federal economic programme on the Slovak than on the Czech economy was by many taken as a sign of the disadvantaged position of Slovaks within the common state.⁸ The call for a greater Slovak control over economic policy thus became the one of the most important and substantial claims of Slovak nationalists.

Yet, even given the activities of nationalists and the political factors conducive to the appeal of the nationalist discourse, to understand post-communist nationalism one must understand the historical developments that formed the basis for the appeal of the ethnic nationalism in Slovakia. Several historical preconditions can be identified. These are the topic of this study.

⁷ For examples of this see (Hungarian) Andrej Ferko: *Stredná Európa - Eseje* (Bratislava: VSSS, 1998) and (Czech) Dušan Slobodník: *Proti sedemhlavému drakovi: Zdejín zápasu za Slovensko* (Bratislava: VSSS, 1998).

⁸ In a January 1992 poll, for example, 53% of respondents in Slovakia anticipated that the Czech economy would grow at the expense of the Slovak. *Centrum pre sociálnu analýzu: Aktuálne problémy Česko-Slovenska, január 1992* (Bratislava: CSA, 1992), p. 29.

Preconditions for the Success of Post-Communist Nationalism.

To clarify the analysis of the historical preconditions of post-communist nationalism, it is useful to divide the examination into two stages. The first stage focuses on the generally different impact nationalist ideas have had in the Eastern and Western parts of Europe. Whereas the civic, territorial version of nationalism became dominant in the West, ethnic, especially linguistically centred nationalism prevailed in Central and Eastern Europe (hereafter CEE)⁹. In the twentieth century, this ethnic nationalism became the underlying ideal for the political reorganisations of CEE in two world wars. The first half of the twentieth century thus served to establish ethnic nationalism as a dominant political ideology and ethnic ties as primary lines of political identification. An example of the causes of the success of ethnic nationalism thus forms what one might call the 'deep' historic background for understanding post-communist nationalism.

The second stage in the analysis focuses on the impact of the socialist era. For the majority of the population of post-communist Slovakia, the just over forty years of communist indoctrination through education, mass media and other means, had formed their primary source of formal socialisation. Moreover, Soviet Communism brought one of the most dramatic periods of social and economic change in Slovak history. The analysis below outlines the different assessments scholars have made of the impact the social, economic and political developments of the last half-century before 1989 had on the strength of nationalism in Slovakia.

⁹ Central and Eastern Europe will in this article denote roughly the area of the former Habsburg Empire as well as the European parts of the Romanov and Ottoman empires.

The Success of Ethnic Nationalism.

In his celebrated 1882 lecture, Ernest Renan started by making a distinction 'between the fusion of "races" in the nations of Western Europe, and the retention of ethnic distinctiveness in Eastern Europe.'¹⁰ In 1944, Hans Kohn developed this theme when he introduced the concepts of 'Western' and 'Eastern' nationalisms.¹¹ While challenged by several authors, this typology has survived the test of time and is used in various forms by scholars today. As most nationalisms contain both civic (Western) and ethnic (Eastern) elements, the distinction is, as Anthony D. Smith points out, analytical and not normative.¹² Czechoslovak nationalism in the interwar years, for example, was clearly ethnic in relations with Germans and Hungarians, but civic in its merger of Slovaks and Czechs into one nation.

On the whole, scholars agree on the basic causes why civic nationalism was more successful in Western Europe and ethnic nationalism in the Eastern part of the continent. The main factors are generally identified as the socio-economic and, partly linked, cultural differences between the two regions at the time of the dissemination of nationalist ideas.¹³ From about the fifteenth century, Western Europe saw the beginning of the development of the modern state. The new economy saw the abolition of serfdom, the weakening of the feudal-agricultural economy and the strengthening of trade and manufacture centred in cities. The develop-

¹⁰ Anthony D. Smith: *Nationalism and Modernism* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 9

¹¹ Hans Kohn: *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York: Collier, 1967), pp. 329-331.

¹² Smith: *Nationalism and Modernism*, p. 126

¹³ For a good analysis of East-West historical differences see Robert Bideleux and Ian Jeffries: *A History of Eastern Europe: Crisis and Change* (London, Routledge, 1998), pp. 15-25.

ment of centralised, strong states, yet with an increasingly urbanised and literate population capable of challenging the authority of the ruler, had important social, economic and political effects. Western, civic nationalism grew gradually out of the socio-economic developments and changes in political thought of pre-nineteenth century Europe.¹⁴ This nationalism was state centred and focused on gaining the loyalty of and homogenising the population of a territory. Crucially, nationalist ideas were promoted in societies whose elites, if not populations, were already quite homogenous culturally. This was particularly the case in Protestant, North-Western Europe.

In important respects, Central and Eastern Europe was relatively 'backward' when nationalist ideas spread through the intellectual life of the region in the early nineteenth century.¹⁵ The relative backwardness had both external and internal causes. The centuries of warfare with the Ottomans had weakened the states in the region and led to their inclusion into large empires. Hungary, which then included today's Slovakia, came under Habsburg rule after the battle of Mohács in 1526. At the eve of the French Revolution, the Ottoman, Habsburg and Romanov empires dominated Central and Eastern Europe. Compared with rapidly developing Western states, the three Eastern empires remained despotic. As the feudal-agricultural economic structure retained its dominance, no strong middle class developed. In Slovakia, or *Felvidék* (Upper Hungary) as the Hungarian rulers called it, the development of mining in Eastern Slovakia, for instance, led to the growth of some smaller towns. Generally, these were dominated by ethnic

¹⁴ See Liah Greenfeld: *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992)

¹⁵ The concept of Central and East European 'backwardness' is obviously very general and simplifying, also given the large differences within the region.

Germans or Jews. The majority of the population of Slovakia remained rural and often illiterate. The socio-economic conditions for cultural homogenisation were, therefore, not present.

The ethnically very heterogeneous dynasties of Central and Eastern Europe were initially not interested in trying to turn their empires into nation-states on the Western model.¹⁶ Only in the final decades of the nineteenth century did Tsarist Russia attempt to Russify the Western Borderlands and the Hungarian leadership promote its policy of Magyarisation (Hungarianisation).¹⁷ Given its lack of an ethnic nobility and being an integral part of Hungary proper, the Slav population of *Felvidék* was particularly exposed. Yet even here the Hungarian nation-building project did not succeed. History was soon to take a surprising turn.

Ultimately more successful than the civic nation builders in CEE were elites opposed to central rule and integration. State centred, civic nationalism had no advantages for such elites. When they adopted nationalist discourse as a political tool, they were inspired by German romanticism rather than Western liberalism. Nationalists in Central and Eastern Europe looked not to Locke and Stuart Mill, but to Herder and Fichte. In German romantic thought, it was not political boundaries that determined the extent of a nation, but culture and particularly language. In the ethnically diverse empires of CEE such ideas were to have a dramatic impact. It was no coincidence that two leading Slovak (Pan-Slav) nationalists, Ján Kollár and Pavol Jozef Šafárik, both studied at

¹⁶ Charles Ingrao: 'Forum: Understanding Ethnic Conflict in Central Europe: An Historical Perspective', *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 27 (1999), no. 2, p. 293.

¹⁷ See Edward C. Thaden (ed.): *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855 - 1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981) and Tibor Frank: 'Hungary and the Dual Monarchy, 1867-1890', in Peter F. Sugar, Peter Hanák and Tibor Frank (eds.): *A History of Hungary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

the University of Jena in the early nineteenth century.¹⁸ The 'father of Slovak nationalism', Ľudovít Štúr, like Kollár and Šafárik, a Protestant, also studied in Germany, in Halle.¹⁹

By the outbreak of World War One, ethnic nationalism had emerged as one of the leading political ideologies in Central and Eastern Europe. In Austria-Hungary, leaders claiming to represent various ethnically defined nations, such as Slovak nationalists in the Slovak National Party, promoted their rights within the Empire. World War I was to bring victory to such nationalist programmes. Towards the end of the war, when the Entente Powers started supporting the programmes of Central and Eastern Europe (mainly exile) nationalists, their support was limited to the demand for an administrative reorganisation of Austria-Hungary. By 1918, however, the right to self-determination had come to mean the right for independence. Allied victory in World War I thus resulted in a reorganisation of the Central European region according to the principle of the 'self-determination of nations', that is, the self-determination of ethnically defined nations. This right was by no means allowed for all, particularly not for the 'defeated nations'. All the new and old, expanded states of the region contained sizeable ethnic minority groups.

While political life in Austria-Hungary had increasingly taken the form of a struggle between the central authorities and nationalist leaders, inter-war Central and Eastern Europe took this to a new level. In the new Czechoslovak Republic as well, ethnic belonging became the main dividing line in politics. Ethnic Ger-

¹⁸ Victor S. Mamatey: 'The Establishment of the Republic', in Victor S. Mamatey and Radomír Luža (eds.): *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic: 1918-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 6.

¹⁹ Peter Petro: *A History of Slovak Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press), p. 65.

mans and Hungarians (Magyars) voted overwhelmingly for ethnically based parties. The Slovaks, according to official ideology part of the Czechoslovak nation, were divided. As in the late Habsburg period, one part of the Slovak political elite was Czechoslovak nationalist, another, strongly connected to the Catholic clergy, was more sceptical to the Czechoslovak idea. Loyal to the Czechoslovak state until pushed into declaring independence in 1939, the Slovak nationalist movement promoted Slovak, as opposed to Czechoslovak, national awareness and nationalism throughout the inter-war period.

While it is impossible to get an accurate picture of the popular support for Slovak nationalism after World War II, it seems safe to agree with Carol Skalnik Leff's claim that when taking power in 1948, the communists faced a 'full-blown' Slovak nationalism.²⁰ If the creation of a Slovak education system, the flowering of Slovak culture and promotion of Slovak nationalism in politics was not sufficient to cement the importance of ethnic belonging and nationalism in people's thinking in the inter-war years, the Second World War was.²¹ With the rise towards authoritarian rule by the Slovak People's Party from the autumn of 1938, ethnic nationalism became a central part of official ideology. In the region as a whole, ethnicity became a supreme organizing principle increasing or limiting chances for employment, economic prosperity and even survival. Supported by the Catholic clergy, the Slovak state sought to educate the Slovaks into becoming good nationalists. Nationalism was promoted in schools, the mass media and

²⁰ Carol Skalnik Leff: *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 281.

²¹ On national identity in the inter-war period see Owen V. Johnson: *Slovakia 1918-1938: Education and the Making of a Nation* (Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1985).

official and religious life in general.²² For many groups among ethnic Slovaks, the war-time state was a positive experience. The relative economic prosperity, the ease of employment (especially for the young intelligentsia) and the elevated position of the Catholic faith and church were aspects of the state that for some Slovaks compared favourably with pre-war Czechoslovakia. Obviously, for parts of the population, the experience had been clearly negative. For Jews and Romanies it was one of inhuman crimes. Yet, despite the horrors and injustices, the experience of independence under German influence strengthened the position of nationalism in Slovak society. While the leaders of the 1944 Slovak National Uprising had called for the reestablishment of Czechoslovakia, they did not want to return to the centralist system of the First Republic (1918-1938). The extent to which Slovakia had been changed by the war became evident in the 1946 election. Whereas the Slovak political scene had been split on the issue of Slovakia's position within the common state before the war, all parties standing in 1946 supported Slovak self-rule within Czechoslovakia in their programmes.²³

The Impact of the Socialist Period.

In the intersection between empirical studies that directly or indirectly offer an explanation for the success of nationalism in post-communist Slovakia and general theoretical works on nationalism, it is possible to identify three main approaches to the question of the impact of the communist era. The first focuses

²² See e.g. Yeshayahu Jelinek: *The Parish Republic: Hlinka's Slovak People's Party 1939-1945* (Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1976).

²³ Jan Rychlík: *Češi a Slováci ve 20.století: Česko-slovenské vztahy 1945-1992* (Bratislava: Academic Electronic Press, 1998), pp.40-42.

mainly on the way in which nationalism survived **despite** the forty years of communism. Given the strength of Slovak nationalism before Communism and the resilience of ethnic and cultural ties, nationalism would, according to this approach, have survived whatever policy the Communist Party had chosen. Scholars taking this approach would put the greatest emphasis on the 'deep' historic background outlined above. The second approach, where scholars stress the continuation of nationalism **through** the socialist period, could be considered the mainstream historical view. This approach focuses on the way Slovak national identity and support for nationalism survived the socialist era not only because of their pre-1948 strength, but also **due to** certain policies during Communism that served to strengthen their basis of support. According to the final approach, the success of post-communist nationalism was mainly due to the policies adopted by the Communist Party. Putting much less emphasis on the strength of pre-communist national identity and nationalism (and thus the 'deep' historical explanation), the 'due to' approach takes two main forms. One focuses on the effects of the socio-economic development of Slovakia during Communism, the other on the impact of the construction of nationally based institutional structures.

These three analytical categories form a continuum rather than three clearly identifiable positions. Differences between studies falling into the different categories are generally one of focus or degree. Few scholars argue the extreme positions: that post-communist nationalism was purely a revival of suppressed nationalism, or that it was a result of developments in the communist period only. Most would note the continued expressions of Slovak nationalism during the communist era, and then stress the degree to which the socialist period suppressed, maintained or actually strengthened the appeal of nationalism.

Nationalism Despite Communism.

Particularly in the first years after the collapse of Communism, the 'return-of-history' argument was commonly used to explain the success of nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe. Pre-communist nationalism, merely suppressed by the communist regimes, re-emerged to become the political factor it had been forty years earlier. As one historian put it:

Communism may have temporarily relieved Central Europe's ethnic tensions for nearly half a century. But if religion was the opiate of the people, Communism proved no more effective than methadone (sic) in suspending their craving for ethnically whole nation states, without providing a cure.²⁴

In the literature on nationalism in Slovakia, Jacques Rupnik supported this view when he argued that Slovak nationalism had been in the 'communist refrigerator' for most of the period after 1948.²⁵ Of the monographs in English discussing Slovak nationalism, Stanislav Kirschbaum's *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival* is, arguably, one of those that leans most toward the 'despite' approach.²⁶ While describing in detail the persistence of nationalism during Communism and the radical changes Slovak society went through, Kirschbaum notes no positive effect of the communist regime on the strength of Slovak national identity and nationalism. Rather, he highlights the attempts the communist lea-

²⁴ Ingrano: 'Forum...', p. 307.

²⁵ Jaques Rupnik, quoted in Martin Bútora and Zora Bútorová: 'Slovakia after the Split', *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 4 (1993), no. 2, p. 75.

²⁶ Stanislav Kirschbaum: *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival* (London: Macmillan, 1995).

dership made at suppressing national identity.²⁷ If Slovak nationalism gained strength during the communist period, it was more a reaction to the 'Czechoslovakism' favoured by the regime.²⁸

The *primordialist* theories of nationalism would be the most obvious theoretical basis for the works in this approach. Stressing the 'ineffable, and at times overpowering' strength of the 'cultural givens' in a society, Clifford Geertz, for example, points to how ethnic ties in some societies come to be seen as a 'natural - some would say spiritual affinity'.²⁹ Given the strong emphasis put on cultural belonging in Slovak history, at least since the late nineteenth century, one could argue that ethnicity had gained a primordial character in Slovak society by the end of World War II. Consequently, the communist regime would not have been able to suppress Slovak identity, and therefore neither the potential for Slovak nationalism. While not going as far as the primordialist in stressing the naturalness of central ties, the so-called *ethno-symbolist* theories of nationalism could also be interpreted as lending support to the 'despite' approach. According to Anthony D. Smith, post-communist nationalism confirms the resilience and strength of ethnic myths, symbols and popular memory. He writes: 'Though the timing of the current ethnic revival is a function of social and geopolitical changes, their contents and intensities are largely determined by pre-existing ethno-symbolic resources,'³⁰

²⁷ Note e.g. *ibid.*, pp. 228, 245, 252. Kirschbaum takes a very favourable view of Slovak nationalism and a more negative one of the common Czech and Slovak state.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

²⁹ Clifford Geertz: *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London: Fontana, 1973), pp. 259-260.

³⁰ Anthony D. Smith: 'LSE Centennial Lecture: The Resurgence of Nationalism? Myth and memory in the renewal of nations', *British Journal of Sociology*, vol.

Empirical support for the 'despite' argument can be found in post-communist Slovakia. In a study of regional patterns of political culture, a group of Slovak sociologists found strong similarities between the inter-war and post-communist era.³¹ In both periods, nationalist and populist parties gained most support in northwest and central Slovakia. The persistence of this regional pattern seems to suggest that at least elements of pre-communist political culture had been preserved. Moreover, studies from other post-communist countries show that national minorities that were actively discouraged from maintaining their separate identity and culture, still emerged to voice nationalist demands after Communism. In Poland, this was the case with the German minority.³² While counter-factual history necessarily amounts to speculation, it does seem likely that regardless of what the policy the Communists had adopted, also the separate Slovak identity, in both its cultural and political expression, would have survived. The relatively short period of communist rule would clearly have facilitated this.

As can be seen from the above, focusing on links to pre-communist nationalism and the preservation of popular myths and memory has some advantages. Firstly, it points to the strength of ethnic nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe after the Second World War. The conviction that ethnically defined nations formed natural bases for political legitimacy, be it in a separate state or as

47 (1996), no. 4, p. 573. Elsewhere, Smith does stress the role of communist policies in preserving these myths and memories. See e.g. Smith: *Nationalism and Modernism*, 237, endnote 9.

³¹ Vladimír Krivý, Viera Fialová and Daniel Balko: *Slovensko a jeho regióny: sociokultúrne súvislosti volebného správania* (Bratislava: Nadácia Médiá, 1996).

³² Janusz Mucha: 'Democratisation and Cultural Minorities: The Polish Case of the 1980s/90s', *East European Quarterly*, vol. 25 (1992), no. 4.

an autonomous region within a larger entity, had by 1948 been deeply ingrained in CEE. This was not only the case with most of the Slovak political elite, but also, many historians would agree, large parts of the population. Secondly, stressing the preservation of political culture is perhaps the only way to explain the continued regional pattern of support for nationalism.

In its pure form, the 'despite' argument rejects any important effect of the socialist period on national identity and the popular view of nationalism. If one accepts that national identity is a social construct, that nations are not some kind of natural social unit, this jump across forty years of history is difficult to defend. As shall be discussed in more detail below, 1948-1989 was probably the most dramatic period of social and economic change in Slovak history. It was also a period of an intense policy of officially managed, public socialisation. Given the impact this period had on people's lives, it seems difficult to assume that popular views on national identity and nationalism would not also change. One example that it had is that before 1948 Slovakia was a deeply religious society and mainstream nationalism was strongly connected to the Catholic Church. In the post-communist period, however, the leading nationalist parties HZDS and SNS were both secular. Catholic nationalism, as represented by the Christian Democratic Party (KDH), was much less successful. Explanations focusing more on the way the communist period served to change Slovak national identity and thereby the bases for nationalism during that period, thus seemingly provide a more convincing explanation for the widespread appeal of nationalism in the post-communist era. Finally, the 'despite' argument cannot explain the emergence of 'new' nationalisms in the post-communist period. Some groups without a history of common national identity and nationalism formed nationalist parties after 1989. Most im-

portantly, this included the Roma community. Also the emergence of a relatively strong nationalism in Moravia and Silesia was a sign of the increased importance of cultural identity.³³ Traditionally a regional identity and before Communism never a major political issue, the Moravian-Silesian autonomy party became the largest party in the Czech National Council in 1990.

Nationalism Through the Communist Era.

The 'through' approach makes up the middle ground between stressing the resilience of pre-communist nationalism and the strengthening of national identity during the communist period. Studies falling into this category would seek to explain the perpetuation of national conflict due to the persistence of support for nationalism built up before the communist period and to certain factors that served to strengthen Slovak national identity during the 1948-1989 era. Most historical studies tend to be in this category.

Carol Skalnik Leff's 1987 seminal book on national conflict in Czechoslovakia is probably the best study in English in this category.³⁴ In Leff's analysis, the deep social, economic and cultural differences between the Czech Lands and Slovakia were politicised during the inter-war republic. A triangular pattern of support and opposition was created, whereby the central leadership in Prague relied on the pro-Czechoslovak section of the Slovak political elite to help neutralise the demands of Slovak nationalists. In the communist period, this pattern persisted until it was displaced

³³ Jaroslav Krejčí and Pavel Machonin: *Czechoslovakia 1918-1992: A Laboratory for Social Change* (Oxford: Macmillan and St. Anthony's, 1996), p. 51.

³⁴ Leff: *National Conflict*. Rychlík: *Češi a Slováci... 1945-1992* is a later, even more detailed work of this approach.

with the ascent of Gustáv Husák to power in 1969. Both the inter-war and the socialist regimes failed in their attempts to modernize away the problem of Slovak nationalism (culturally and educationally in the inter-war period, economically during socialism). These failures, combined with the unwillingness of both regimes to adequately accommodate the Slovak nationalist's demands, led to a growing sense of antagonism (mutual antagonism, as Czechs resented that Slovaks used times of international crisis to force through their demands). Leff concludes: 'Given the persistence of Slovak national feeling, on the one hand, and Czech power, on the other, the result has been persistent national conflict'.³⁵

While Leff notes that Slovak nationalism was strong in the post-war period, much due to the experience of statehood during the war, she also identifies several factors during the communist era that served to strengthen its basis. The existence of separate Slovak political institutions, for instance, was important. Leff writes: 'Week as the KSS (Slovak Communist Party) and the SNR (Slovak National Council) were in the years following 1948, both would retain the capacity to serve as nationalist time bombs'.³⁶ One important reason for this was that the system of separate Slovak institutions created a Slovak elite separate from Prague-based Czechoslovak one.³⁷ Also other aspects of the regime's policy proved counter-productive to its official aim of promoting the 'coming together' (*zblíženie*) of Czechs and Slovaks. The mass media, for instance, was 'segmented and not adapted to the integrative intentions of the policy-making elite'.³⁸ Thus, by the late 1980, 'the Slovak question' had become 'deeply, perhaps

³⁵ Leff: *National Conflict*, p. 282.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 294 .

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 297 .

irreversibly, woven into the fabric of Czechoslovak politics as usual'. This statement carries with it the implication that the Slovak question will continue to assert itself as a political force in the future.³⁹ Three years after Leff published her study, her prediction came true.

Theoretically, the 'through' approach occupies the middle ground between the primordialists emphasis on the strength of cultural ties and the stress put on social processes by the modernist and institutional views outlined below. With more emphasis on the way myths, symbols, values and memories are preserved in societies, ethno-symbolist theories would come closest to forming a theoretical basis for this approach. From the ethno-symbolist perspective, the communists' attempt to defuse nationalism in Slovakia by flagging symbols of self-determination could only serve to strengthen the feeling of national identity. The reason for this was that the only symbols that would evoke a positive response from the population would be symbols that had a basis in popular tradition. For example, while the communists did try to reframe the historical image of Ľudovít Štúr as a social revolutionary, they could not eradicate the view of Štúr as a champion of Slovak rights so strongly ingrained in popular tradition and myths. As Smith writes: "Ethno-history is no sweetshop in which nationalists may 'pick and mix'; it sets limits to any appropriation by providing a distinctive context and patterns of events, personages and processes...".⁴⁰

The most obvious strength of the 'through' approach is that by stressing both the strong social basis of pre-communist nationalism and the way it was maintained and changed during the 1948-1989 period, it can account more or less convincingly for

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 281-282.

⁴⁰ Smith: *Nationalism and Modernism*, p. 45

nationalism in both periods. It points to the continuity of not only political conflict over the status of Slovakia, but also that of popular symbols and myths. Noting how the communist period maintained and strengthened preexisting national identity and traditions also allows for an explanation of the persistent regional differences in support for nationalism.

Despite these important strengths, however, the 'through' approach does have some weak points. Some will argue that the most important of these is that it does not go far enough in emphasising how dramatically the communist period changed Slovak society. As with the 'despite' approach, the focus on the continuation of national conflict through the communist period also faces problems in explaining the 'new' nationalisms of the post-communist era. The political organisation and activism of the Romany community after 1989, for example, is difficult to explain without stressing the way the communist period served to strengthen the importance of ethnic belonging.

Nationalism Due to Communism.

Studies focusing on the way the communist period served to strengthen national identity and nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe are generally more theoretically grounded than the two approaches above. The presentation of these will therefore have to be a bit different. Two main theoretical starting points can be identified.⁴¹ The first, based on modernisation theories of

⁴¹ Shari Cohen supposes a third, unconventional, approach in her *Politics without a Past: The Absence of History in Postcommunist Nationalism* (London: Duke University Press, 1999). It was not the strength of national identity in Slovakia that formed the basis for the success of post-communist nationalism, Cohen claims, but rather the lack of a clear historical consciousness. By

nationalism, focus on the massive socio-economic changes in the CEE countries during the forty years of communist rule. As many other countries and areas of the region, Slovakia underwent a rapid transformation from an agricultural to an industrial society. Such a process of social modernization, scholars such as Ernest Gellner claim, is the basis for the strength of post-communist nationalism. The second starting point is based on the so called 'new institutionalism' in social science. According to its proponents, the communist regimes honoured their Leninist commitment to national self-determination by building nationally defined institutions and stressing national identities. Rather than, as intended, weakening the social basis for nationalism, however, their policy served to strengthen it. Put otherwise: the Soviet type nationality policy was to be 'nationalist in form, socialist in content'. When the socialist content disappeared, only the nationalist form remained.

Modernisation.

It is the erosion of traditional society and its values with urbanisation and the growth of the state that, in Gellner's view, is responsible for the emergence of nationalism.⁴² In an agricultural society, where mobility is low and socialisation within the family and local community is sufficient, a person's language and culture is of little consequence. Urban life, particularly in the industrial age, exercises different pressures on the population. Industrial society, requiring formal socialisation through an education

preventing the emergence of a collective memory of World War II, the communist regime made Slovak society susceptible to elite manipulation after the collapse of communism.

⁴² Ernest Gellner: *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

system, thus makes an individual's culture and especially language important. Particularly when cultural differences overlapped with an actual or perceived pattern of social and economic discrimination, nationalism is a likely outcome. In socialist societies, as they suppressed civil society, class identities and other social lines of identification, the importance of cultural identities became particularly strong. When the regimes collapsed, there existed no 'serious rival ideology' or any 'serious rival institutions' capable of providing alternatives to identification along national lines.⁴³ In the resulting 'double vacuum', nationalism, the 'culture of industrialism', was 'the most plausible and easily available candidate for filling this emptiness.'⁴⁴

After the Communists came to power in Czechoslovakia in 1948, Slovakia entered its most important period of socio-economic development. Over a period of seventeen years, the share of agricultural workers in the total workforce more than halved: from 62.2% in 1948 to 30.1% in 1965.⁴⁵ By 1989 it has reached 14.5%. Similarly, the percentage of the population living in cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants increased from 11.5% in 1950 to 40.8% in 1991.⁴⁶ In the space of a few decades, Slovakia was transformed from an agricultural to an industrial society. That the industrial structure of Slovakia was accordingly based on the socialist idealisation of heavy industry, matters little in this context. Territorial and social mobility increased, as did the general level of education. The steadily increasing availability and reach

⁴³ Ernest Gellner: 'Nationalism in the Vacuum', in Alexander J. Motyl (ed.): *Thinking Theoretically about Soviet Nationalities: History and Comparison in the Study of the USSR* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 250.

⁴⁴ Ernest Gellner: 'Homeland of the Unrevolution', *Daedalus*, vol. 122 (1993), no. 3, p. 152.

⁴⁵ See Krejčí and Machonin: *Czechoslovakia*, p. 120.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

of mass communication, such as radio and television, also served to promote a standardised ('high') culture. Combined, these factors served to increase cultural homogeneity in the Slovak population and put focus on the differences between the Slovaks and other cultural groups in society. An individual's cultural-cum-national identity was therefore highlighted.

The main strength of the modernist approach is that it brings our attention to the massive social and economic changes in the region during Communism. Slovak society was fundamentally changed through industrialisation and urbanisation. Most theories of nationalism hold that modernisation (towards a Western type society) is at least conducive to the formation of national consciousness and emergence of nationalism. If one accepts this, the socialist period is likely to have strengthened the appeal of nationalism in Slovakia. Furthermore, the modernisation approach offers an explanation for why new ethnic conflicts arose once Communism released its grip. Even the communities without the history of nationalism can be seen to have been mobilised as a result of industrialisation.

There are, however, several weaknesses with this modernist view. First, in its pure form it is very functional and does not accord much importance to ideas. This is problematic particularly because the massive transformation and uprooting of Slovak society took place under heavy pressure from socialist socialisation. Second, if urbanisation and industrialisation were the main causes of post-communist nationalism, then one should expect to find the strongest nationalism where the effects of these processes was strongest. Before 1948 eastern Slovakia was the most 'backward' and multi-cultural region of Slovakia. Consequently, it was one of the regions that went through the most dramatic socio-economic development during Communism. Despite this, after 1989, sup-

port for nationalist parties in the region was well below the Slovak average.⁴⁷ Indeed, inhabitants of Košice, the 'capital' of eastern Slovakia and the second largest city in the country, were among those most vocally opposed to the break-up of the ČSFR in the autumn of 1992.⁴⁸

The Institutional Approach.

The institutional approach places the cause of the strength of post-communist nationalism in the policies and structure, the institutions, of the communist regimes. The stress Leninism put on the right of national self-determination led most Soviet-style socialist regimes to not only promote national self-identification, but also build institutional frameworks along national lines. This served to institutionalise national identity as the key identity and thus create the nationalist bias of politics after the collapse of Communism.

In its most basic form, the institutional approach stresses the way in which members of political institutions tend to promote the interests of their institutions in competition with others. Throughout the socialist period, Slovakia had cultural, academic, administrative and political institutions separate from the all-Czechoslovak ones. Due to the policy of stressing the Slovakness of these institutions, recruitment was conducted almost exclusively in Slovakia, and sometimes among Slovaks only. The separate political institutions consisted most importantly of a branch of the Communist Party (KSS), a parliamentary assembly (SNR), and

⁴⁷ See Krivý, Fialová and Balko: *Slovensko a jeho regióny*, pp. 291-342.

⁴⁸ For a more humorous expression of this see Peter Holub: 'Ať už to nešťěstí přijde: Košice se brání národnímu sjednocení', *Respect*, 24-30, August 1992, pp. 5-6.

(except for the period 1960-69) an executive branch. While limited in their political importance during Communism, these institutions gained a dramatically different role with democratisation. Not long after the collapse of Communism, the Slovak government and legislature started calling for an increase in their competencies. Using nationalist rhetoric to mobilise the population was an obvious way to gain support for strengthening the authority and power of the Slovak institutions at the expense of federal ones.

On a more complex level, the institutional approach examines the wider impact institutional structures had on creating certain attitudes and beliefs in the population. One leading institutional theoretician, Rogers Brubaker, explained the strength of post-communist nationalism in the Soviet Union as a result of the 'dual institutionalisation' of what he termed 'territorial nationhood' and 'ethnic nationality'.⁴⁹ Territorial nationhood refers to the linking of a specific territory to national identity through the administrative division of the country according to nationality. As with most administrative components in the Soviet Union, Slovakia was a clearly defined territorial unit interpreted as the homeland of the Slovaks. While this was made explicit after the federalisation of Czechoslovakia in 1968, it was implicit already from the end of World War II. The principle of equality (*rovný s rovným*) introduced during the war and maintained in the 1948 Constitution

⁴⁹ Rogers Brubaker: *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp 23-54. The nationality and, particularly after 1969, the institutional structure of socialist Czechoslovakia was almost identical to that of the Soviet Union.

was clearly interpreted as a principle of equality of nations.⁵⁰ Hungarians, Ruthenes, Romanies and other national groups in Slovakia were national minorities; the Slovaks were the *štátotvorný* (literally: state forming) nation. Along with officially pronouncing Czechoslovakia a country of two nations, the regime built institutions to create the appearance of national self-determination. While Czechoslovakia did not go as far as the Soviet Union in awarding the constituent republics symbols of statehood, the Czech and Slovak Socialist Republics were in the 1968 Law on Federalisation declared to have the status of independent legal subjects that surrendered part of their sovereignty to the Federation. The Republics were also awarded the 'inalienable right of self-determination even to the point of separation'.⁵¹ The Law on Federalization thus 'rehabilitated and restored the idea of a national state as an attribute of a fully developed nation'.⁵² The effect of this policy was to encourage Slovaks to think of themselves as a separate nation with wide-ranging political rights.

The second aspect of Brubaker's institutional approach focuses on the way the communist regime made ethnic identification compulsory. In common English usage, the concepts of 'nationality' and 'citizenship' are synonymous. In the socialist federations, however, the distinction was important. All who held Czechoslovak passports were Czechoslovak citizens. Their nationality, however, would be Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Ruthene, Roman, Polish, Ukrainian or some other. A person's nationality

⁵⁰ Katarína Zavacká: "Metamorfózy štátoprávneho postavenia Slovenska v Československu v rokoch 1948-1967" in Vladimír Goněc (ed.): *Česko-slovenská historická ročenka 1998* (Brno: Masarykova Universita, 1998), pp. 17-29.

⁵¹ See 'Ústavní zákon 143/1968 Sb.' at

<http://www.psp.cz/docs/texts/constitution.1968.html>.

⁵² Kusý: *Eseje*, p. 69.

was ascertained at birth according to that of her of his parents and could generally not be changed. As in inter-war Czechoslovakia, the communist regime did promote a Czechoslovak political identity. Avoiding the word *národ*, nation, which has clear ethnic connotations, the communists called for the creation of a 'Czechoslovak working people' (*československý pracující lid*). The identity was not, even in relation to the Czechs and Slovaks, intended as a Czechoslovak cultural identity. On the contrary, the Communist Party put great stress on promoting the cultures of the various national groups, particularly the Slovak. Generous resources were devoted to building cultural institutions and supporting the cultural life of all official nationalities.⁵³ For most children primary and sometimes secondary and higher education was available in their mother tongue. While all culture was to be socialist, the art forms favored by the regime, those that were seen to form the basis of national culture (such as folk dancing and traditional artisan-and craftsmanship), were not particularly affected. The Centre for the Production of Folk Art (ÚLUV) and the folk-dancing and folk-music group the Slovak People's Artistic Collective (SLUK) were presented as the best of centuries-old, traditional Slovak culture, thus reminding all of not only the cultural, but also historical separateness of the Slovaks.

Combined, these two processes of institutionalisation made nations and nationality into basic units of people's world-view. When the communist regime collapsed and democratisation started, nationally based institutions and their elites became centres of

⁵³ See Elena Londáková: 'Slovenské predjarie: Mýty a realita slovenskej inteligencie v Československu pred rokom 1956 (a po ňom)', in Vladimír Goněc (ed.): *Česko-slovenská historická ročenka 1998* (Brno: Masarykova Univerzita, 1998), p. 210 and Dušan Kováč: *Dejiny Slovenska* (Prague: NLN, 1998), pp. 275-276.

political activity.⁵⁴ National identity became the basic organising principle in politics. The nationally defined elites in the separate national institutions could gain popular support among a population identified and identifying according to their nationality by claiming to defend the interest of that nation. The system of compulsory national identification thus became the basis for new political constituencies.

The main strength of the institutional approach is that it offers a very powerful explanation of the near universal success of national identity and nationalism as political principles after Communism. It does so by placing the cause of this success in the very world-view engendered by the communist regime. As Brubaker writes: the communist nationality policy 'created a political field supremely conducive to nationalism'.⁵⁵ The 'new' nationalism of the post-communist period can therefore be explained. Due to its explanatory strength, the institutional approach has emerged as one of the most popular among scholars trying to explain post-communist nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe. However, the institutional approach, like the other presented above, has its shortcomings. Like the modernist approach it cannot alone explain the regionalised support for nationalism in Slovakia, nor does it account for the impact of pre-communist nationalism.

⁵⁴ This was also the case for minorities that did not have explicitly political institutions. For example, the Slovak Hungarian cultural organization CSEMA-DOK became the centre of Hungarian political activity in the first period after 1989.

⁵⁵ Brubaker: *Nationalism Reframed*, p. 17

Conclusion

While the process that led to the break-up of the common Czech and Slovak state after communism has received a fair amount of attention, few scholars have attempted to comprehensively explain why nationalism had such success in post-communist Slovakia.⁵⁶ The above is only an overview of the possible explanations for the success of post-communist nationalism that would meet with the most support among scholars today. In fact, it is doubtful there will ever be single generally accepted explanation, be it theoretical or historical. As Katherine Verdery noted, nationalism in the post-communist region 'has many causes, ranging from the macro-social to matters of personal identity. It is, in other words, overdetermined, and the relevant causes vary from one country to another.'⁵⁷ What is needed to approach a consensus on what factors were most important in the Slovak case, is a series of studies that evaluate the explanatory power of various approaches, such as those above. If this article serves to encourage someone to write such a study, it has served its purpose.

⁵⁶ To this author's knowledge, the only monograph that explicitly does so is Cohen: *Politics without a Past*.

⁵⁷ Katherine Verdery: 'Nationalism and National Sentiment in Post-socialist Romania', *Slavic Review*, vol. 52 (1993), no. 2, p. 180.

Reversing the Trend: Central Europe from Dictatorship to Democracy¹

Ján Čarnogurský

A currently-popular political term is “globalization.” Seen from a North American perspective, it is very real. When one reads American or Canadian newspapers, magazines or books, the globe seems to be a tiny button. Planes and boats filled with goods dash from one continent to the next. Billions of dollars are transferred via computers and satellites. Television viewers can instantly discover if it is hot or cold in distant parts of the world on the Weather Channel. Its pictures show continents without state borders, and the sky above them is either sunny and clear or cloudy and raining. Some observers praise globalization, some protest against it, but it probably cannot be stopped.

Central Europe has given the world many scientific, economic and cultural stimuli from which globalization evolved. The territory between Ukraine and Germany, Scandinavia and the Balkans, is only about 1/10 the size of Canada, but it has six times as many inhabitants. A multitude of nations exist here, sometimes at peace, and sometimes at war. In the 20th century the Slavs and Germans clashed in two World Wars, into which Canada and the United States were drawn. American and Canadian military cemeteries in Europe speak dramatically about Central Europe’s signi-

¹ A public lecture presented at the University of Ottawa on February 29, 2000.

ficance to these two countries. On the other hand, Central Europe also produced Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig Von Beethoven, Antonín Dvořák, Albert Einstein and John Paul II.

Central Europe has been a problem for the Great Powers in the last two centuries, and after World War II it became especially acute. The victorious Allies solved the problem by erasing it. They divided Central Europe between them and for four decades it disappeared from the political map. Ironically enough, Central Europe at this time groaned under the highest concentration of soldiers and weapons in the history of mankind. Even though it was divided, Central Europe continued to exist. One Austrian publicist commented that Central Europe is everywhere where cafés serve soda water with black coffee. Such coffee and soda continued to be served in Warsaw, Munich, Vienna, Budapest and Bratislava.

Central Europe also had a foreign social system forced upon it. This foreign system provoked isolated explosions against it: in East Berlin in 1953; in Poznań and Budapest in 1956; in Prague and Bratislava in 1968; and in Gdańsk in 1980. All were suppressed by external forces (or the threat of such force) and all evoked a feeling of solidarity among the nations of Central Europe. Before World War II every Central European country, except Switzerland, had disputes with its neighbours. Repeated interventions by the Soviet Union led Central Europeans to a new awareness of their common suffering.

Eventually, Central European dissidents started to cooperate. In the 1960's opponents of the various communist regimes, who had been imprisoned in the 1950's, were released. It became possible, though with much difficulty, for people to travel between Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The level of freedom in these countries varied. In 1968 Czechoslovakia was the most free,

and Polish and Hungarian political émigrés in the West were able to bring forbidden books, magazines and photocopying machines to their respective countries via Czechoslovakia. In the 1970's and 1980's more liberal conditions prevailed in Hungary and Poland, and forbidden materials could be smuggled into Czechoslovakia from those countries.

After the establishment of the Charter'77 movement in Czechoslovakia, dissidents in Hungary and Poland helped out. In the second half of the 1980's I twice met with Czech and Polish dissidents on the border. The first meeting was carefully planned. A few people on each side agreed on a place and time in northern Moravia. There the border runs through deep forests. Even though dissidents on both sides of the border had had their passports confiscated, they could approach the border in groups of two or three, ostensibly to pick mushrooms. After about an hour's walk, we arrived at the agreed-upon rendezvous and in the next three or four hours planned our future activities. The most prominent participant from the Czechoslovak side at the first meeting was Václav Havel. All the leading Polish dissidents, except Lech Wałęsa (who was interned by General Jaruzelski), were there. The second meeting took place in the early summer of 1989, when a free election had already been scheduled in Poland. Many of the participants were subsequently elected to the Polish Parliament. As MP's they had diplomatic passports, and they used them to visit us in August.

The end of communism in 1989 was full of paradoxes. When Tadeusz Mazowiecki won the elections in Poland and came to power, I was in a Bratislava jail. Václav Havel then wrote to Mazowiecki and asked him to intervene with the Czechoslovak authorities on my behalf. Mazowiecki sent his reply to Havel via the-then communist Polish Ambassador in Prague!

Religious activists in Slovakia and Poland were very close. Religious oppression in Slovakia was much stronger than in Poland. The Slovak underground church sent its followers to summer camps in Poland and Polish bishops ordained Slovak priests who had secretly studied theology in Slovakia. Also, many thousands of religious books, printed by Slovaks in the West, were smuggled into Slovakia via the Polish Catholic church.

Thus far I have spoken about solidarity between dissidents in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The solidarity of the non-communist Central European countries, Germany and Austria, was reflected in their political and moral support for dissidents in communist countries and their acceptance of refugees from those countries. Some refugees escaped in a spectacular manner. At the beginning of the 1980's a Slovak flew across the border to Austria in a balloon which he had made by sewing together a bunch of raincoats. Another built himself a cart, which he then suspended from a high-voltage power line that went to Austria and he pulled himself across the border on the suspended cart!

Twenty years ago NATO's decision to install medium-range missiles in Germany provoked a heated debate. The Eastern bloc responded with threats of military countermeasures. Pershing missiles were eventually placed in Germany. We dissidents supported this move. We knew that the Communists only understood the use of force, and it was ultimately the demonstrated strength of the West, and the internal dissent in Central Europe, that led to the fall of Communism.

Central Europe resurrected itself after the fall of Communism. Austria abolished its visa requirements for us as early as December, 1989. As a result, huge crowds of people moved across the breached Iron Curtain. I was among them. Even though my home

town of Bratislava borders on Austria, I was 46 years old before I could cross this border!

Democratic revolutions in 1989 brought people who shared the same values of a civic society to power. The time had come to demonstrate that these common values really counted for us. We faced the challenge of completing the reverse trend and bringing cooperation to Central Europe, and even a new integration.

It was necessary first to remove certain remnants of Communism. In July, 1991 the Warsaw Pact was formally dissolved. At the same time, the Council for Economic Assistance (COMECON) was abolished. This decision was controversial because for four decades the economies of the states of East Central Europe had focussed on eastern markets, and these were suddenly gone. COMECON's member states now traded with each other only on the basis of market demands. Prices were also allowed to reflect market forces. At the same time, Russia started to sell these countries raw materials at world prices and for world currencies.

At the fall of Communism two slogans common to all Central European countries suddenly rang out. They were "Free Elections," and "Back to Europe." Free elections did take place in all these countries during 1990. However, joining the European Union was another matter. Brussels was far away and the roads leading to it were fraught with difficulties. It would first be necessary to bring post-communist Central European countries back together.

The initiative came from President Václav Havel. In February of 1990 Havel invited the Prime Ministers of Poland and Hungary to a meeting with their Czechoslovak counterpart in Bratislava. The plan was to get these three states to cooperate in the future. At their second meeting in Visegrád, Hungary, in 1991, this coalition acquired its name from this historic locality where, in the 14th

century the Kings of Poland, Bohemia and Hungary had agreed upon peace and mutual trade.

In its short history, the Visegrád Group has been through a period of growth and decline. The geographical location, common history, interconnected economy and identical external interests of these countries pushed them into close cooperation. However, Václav Klaus's government in Prague did not place much importance on cooperation in the Visegrád Group. Similarly, Vladimír Mečiar's government in Bratislava looked for other ways to achieve its goals. With a change in government in 1998 in both Prague and Bratislava, the situation improved and the Visegrád Group caught its second wind.

Slovakia's membership is important for the Visegrád Group, which has no formal standing. Slovakia lies in its centre and is the only country to border all three of the others. Without Slovakia's active participation, the Visegrád Group would lose many of its advantages.

Membership in the Visegrád Group does not remove all of the disputes between its members, but it does make resolving them easier. One such dispute was the completion of the joint Czechoslovak-Hungarian Gabčíkovo waterworks on the Danube River. After the collapse of Communism, Hungary opposed the completion of these waterworks. Following a mutual agreement in 1992, both countries requested a ruling from the International Court of Justice in the Hague. Five years later the Court ruled that Slovakia was almost entirely in the right. The Gabčíkovo waterworks stopped attracting media attention and now reliably supply the grid with electricity, regulate the flow of the Danube, and have become a recreation area. The dispute between Hungary and Slovakia is over, although the technical and financial issues

surrounding the Gabčíkovo waterworks are still being discussed by experts from both countries.

While Europe was divided (1945-1989), we in the East followed the gradual formation of today's European Union with interest, envy and admiration. We did not understand all of the problems which occurred while the original six states unified; we smiled at how fishing, the production of butter, the sale of wine and the like could be problems for the member countries. Despite this, the attractiveness of the unifying Western Europe grew.

After the fall of Communism all of the countries of Central Europe expressed an interest in joining the European Union. Talks of the accession of these countries to the European Union started very quickly and were completed at the beginning of the 1990's through the conclusion of European agreements on association.

The European Union's entry and expansion into Central Europe is important from many perspectives. Henry Kissinger stated that when a power vacuum had formed in Central Europe in the past, Russia and Germany were pulled into and clashed over it. A power vacuum formed in Central Europe after the fall of Communism, but the European Union has filled it in. The agreements on association opened up the European Union's market to the former communist countries.

On the other hand, the markets of post-communist countries are only gradually opening up. The European Union later established four so-called "Copenhagen criteria" for those interested in joining the Union. They are a developed market economy, the ability to cope with competition in the European Union, a stabilized democracy with guarantees for the functioning of constitutional institutions and the protection of minorities, the adoption of

the European *acquis communautaire* and an institutional structure comparable to the European Union's.

At the same time, the European Union developed a number of financial assistance programmes for post-communist countries. The European Union's political and economic criteria speeded up reforms in post-communist countries, while at the same time isolating sources of political extremism. In 1997 the European Union invited Estonia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia to negotiate their future membership. In 1999 it also invited Slovakia, Lithuania and Latvia, as well as Romania and Bulgaria.

These countries' membership in the European Union has wide support from the population everywhere. It seems as if membership in the Union has turned into a speed trial for the governments of Central European countries. Slovakia fell out of the first group in 1997 because of the European Union's political reservations about Slovak politics at the time. The current Slovak government is trying to catch up with its neighbours and enter the European Union at roughly the same time, around 2004.

In expanding to the East, the European Union is approaching half a billion inhabitants. It will expand its territory and strengthen its position on the world playing field. At the same time, it will reach the eastern border of Western Christianity. Expansion further east will mean crossing the borders of a civilization. In fact, Greece's current membership and Bulgaria's and Romania's future memberships are preparing the European union for just such a step.

Another western organization that has expanded its presence into Central Europe since the fall of Communism is NATO. For a while after the Warsaw Pact was abolished, the armies of its former members felt aimless. However, in 1991 the military units from former communist Central European countries took part in

operation Desert Storm. Soon thereafter war broke out in Yugoslavia and again all the states contributed at least small units to UNPROFOR. In 1993 I visited a Slovak UNPROFOR corps of engineers in Croatia. They were under the command of a Canadian colonel named Harris, who was very satisfied with their performance. It was a new experience for Slovak soldiers and officers, and certainly also for Czechs and Poles and others, when they started to use NATO terminology and operational rules. The Partnership for Peace programme enabled former enemies to come closer together and gradually unify at least their communication technology.

All the ex-communist Central European countries showed an interest in joining NATO. At NATO's Madrid Summit in 1997, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary were invited to join. They have since become members. Slovakia was excluded at that time. The Slovak army is now increasing its cooperation with NATO. It has liaison officers at the Brussels headquarters and membership in NATO is part of the current Slovak government's agenda. But, according to opinion polls, the majority of the Slovak population does not, as yet, support Slovakia's membership in NATO.

Germany has long been the most important country in Central Europe. From the end of the Napoleonic wars to the end of the Second World War German nationalism was a source of tension in Europe. After the defeat of Hitler, Germany turned itself around. Mostly under Christian Democratic governments, Germany achieved an economic miracle and rebuilt itself in record time. It then became a driving force for European integration, and still is today. In the 45 years since the war, Germany earned such trust from the East that there were no reservations in Central Europe about Germany's reunification. François Mitterand's

France and Margaret Thatcher's Great Britain placed greater obstacles to Germany's reunification than did Poland, Czechoslovakia or Russia. Germany acknowledged the permanence of its border with Poland and reconfirmed the invalidity of the Munich Agreement. Germany contributes the most to the European Union's treasury. British historian Paul Johnson called Germany of the 1920's a leading intellectual power. I do not intend to discuss the intellectual level of today's Germany, but politically Germany plays a very constructive role in Central Europe.

Of the Central European countries, Poland is trying to present itself as a regional counterbalance to Germany. In Poland's case there is also a counterbalance to Johnson's statement on German intellect. Polish author Stanislaw Stomma wrote that Poland's intellectual potential has always exceeded its material possibilities. Unfortunately, Poland's material possibilities will probably hold back its intellectual potential for some time.

Post-communist Central European countries also look to Germany with another question. Germany will have an important voice in the European Union's institutional reforms. The reforms will determine if and when the European Union will be able to accept new members. Under the current rules, the European Union does not have the resources to finance the development of new members from Central Europe to enable them to attain the level of the Union's current members. The countries that receive more money from the Union than they put into it do not want to share income with new members. The countries that contribute more than they take out, especially Germany, are not prepared—justifiably so—to pay more. German politicians freely answer the question of how to solve this quandary by saying that the European Union has always developed by a crisis coming along and then moving towards half-compromise. We shall see.

The new Austrian government has posed a challenge for its eastern neighbours. In the Second World War, every country east of Germany, with the exception of Hungary, fought against Germany sooner or later. Some of them suffered exceptionally heavy losses. For example, Poland lost 20% of its population. Proud reminders of the Nazi regime from a politically relevant personality in Austria (Jörg Haider) are, therefore, unimaginable and incomprehensible in these countries. On the contrary, 40 years of denial of democracy under Communism fostered a tendency in these countries to trust democratic rules regardless of their content. Central European ex-communist countries were only able to give a constrained reaction to the new government in Austria; even more so as the harshness of the reaction from the European Union and some other countries was surprising.

The division of Czechoslovakia in 1993 may seem to be at odds with the new integration of Central Europe. However, I would like to point out that in Central Europe the concept of a nation is understood in an ethnic, not in a political sense. Nations that see themselves as ethnically unique may live in one state. Two nations—Slovaks and Czechs—lived separate lives in Czechoslovakia. There was practically no common Czechoslovak culture, only Czech and Slovak cultures. The Slovak and Czech languages are similar, but they are also different. Under the communist dictatorship it was possible to silence national aspirations, but after the restoration of freedom the different political conceptions of the Czechs and Slovaks grew. The 1992 elections (the first free ones since 1946) brought very different political parties into power in Slovakia and in the Czech Lands, and these parties agreed to divide the country, and the Czechoslovak Federal Parliament then adopted the Constitutional Law on the Division of Czechoslovakia.

Happily, the story does not end there. After the breakup, Slovakia and the Czech Republic maintained fair or even friendly relations. When there were politically different governments in Prague and Bratislava, relations between the Republics were fair; when there are similar political parties in power in Prague and Bratislava, relations are friendly. The people of Slovakia and the Czech Republic have remained on friendly terms. According to public opinion surveys in Slovakia, the Czechs are the Slovaks' favourite nation, and vice-versa. Slovak and Czech delegations generally support each other at international conferences. In the last few weeks the governments and parliaments of both countries have approved an agreement on the property settlement of the division of the former Czechoslovakia. Both cooperate within the Visegrád group and their foreign policies are equally oriented towards western integration and security groups. On the other hand, the division of Czechoslovakia is final and there is no desire to resurrect it. Only one political party in 1994 ran on a pro-Czechoslovak platform and it received a paltry one per cent of the vote.

If we compare political developments in the two Republics since the "velvet divorce," Slovakia's history has probably been more colourful. First, the Slovaks removed certain doubts about the viability of their state. Slovakia's economy also did fairly well despite a rather odd dispute between Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar and President Michal Kováč. The dispute did not escalate into a shooting war, but did result in the abduction of the president's son to Austria. In 1999 the Slovak Parliament revoked the immunity of Ivan Lexa, the previous head of the secret service, who was suspected of having masterminded the abduction. In the seven years of Slovakia's independence there were three changes of government between political groups so opposed to each other that they were able to abduct or tolerate the abduc-

tion of one of their sons. Despite this, all the political changes took place democratically, within the parameters of the Constitution and on the basis of freely-held elections. In September of 1998, 84% of the electorate turned out to vote in the parliamentary elections. After 40 years of communism democracy works in strange ways. I often mention such figures as proof of the strength of democracy in Slovakia. I admit that it is sometimes necessary to make more of an effort for democracy to function in Slovakia than in other countries. But, it has always worked out.

The sometimes strange workings of democracy in post-communist countries directly relate to their communist heritage. Communism ended in a sudden collapse but it soon became apparent that the Communists quickly found their way in the new social order. The Communist Parties changed their names and became Socialist Parties and former Communists appeared in other parties as well. After a short period of anti-communist enthusiasm in 1990 came the realization that economics, culture and politics are more complicated. It is not possible to replace people en masse because there are simply not enough experts to go around and certain stages of development cannot be omitted. In one country after another the former Communists were so successful in elections and constitutional cohabitation that even France was amazed. But the market economy was not disrupted and democracy survived. This is testimony to the strength of western democratic and political institutions which have come to the East.

Just to complete the picture, I will mention that the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) has existed since 1993. Originally it was between the Visegrád Group, but later it was joined by Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania. The Agreement liberalized trade between the participating countries and, except for agricultural products, it works well.

Another attempt at cooperation between Central and Eastern European countries is the Central European Initiative. It was established in 1989 as an association of four states (Italy, Austria, Hungary and Yugoslavia) at Italy's initiative. Today it includes sixteen states. Its aim is, not only economic cooperation, but also cultural and political, especially assistance in associating its members with the European Union. The Central European Initiative, on the other hand, is stagnating.

Every generation has the tendency to talk about a change of paradigm brought about by its own efforts. Who would not want to change the world, even if we cannot explain it? Why should we give up this ambition? All the more so because the paradigm has changed. For centuries European history was marked by conflicts between Germany and France. It seems that these conflicts are over. In the twentieth century two World Wars started in Central Europe. I do not see a source of tension here that could lead to another such conflict. Now the most serious dispute in Western and Central Europe is the "Beef War" between France and Great Britain. As long as we do not ask the poor cows for their opinion, we can really talk about a change of paradigm. If in future decades we manage to expand the zone of peace further east, and even to the Balkans, then Isaiah's words might come to apply to Europe: "He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Trends in 20th Century Slovak Filmmaking

Martin Votruba

The transition from the rule of censorship to the rule of the free market after the collapse of Communism thirteen years ago has been more painful for Slovak filmmakers than for other artists. Filmmaking requires a substantially higher initial investment than other performing and fine arts. People are ready to pay much less for a movie ticket or rental than to buy a book or painting. This puts small countries like Slovakia at a great disadvantage. In a world where feature films in a language other than English have difficulty finding an audience outside their own language areas, even if they are in French, German or Spanish, the same-language audience for films in Slovak is the size of a single frame. A film in the Slovak language costs as much as a comparable film in any other language, but the chances that it will recoup its costs are minimal. Yet, several dedicated filmmakers have managed to find institutional and private support, perhaps resigned to the fact that profits will remain elusive, while hoping to make a statement, push the envelope, create Art.

Filmmaking began in Slovakia while it was still part of Hungary in the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary. According to film historians, the first motion picture shows in the Slovak counties took place in Košice in December, 1896 and a few days later in Bratislava (then called Prešporok by the Slovaks, *Pressburg* by the Germans). That was only a year after the Lumière brothers' first-ever public picture show in Paris and just six months after a similar showing in New York. The early shows were organized by

traveling entrepreneurs, often in cafés or similar venues, but also under tents. People's visual perceptions of the world were being changed forever and those making and showing the films knew it. A show in Nitra in 1903 still touted the advent of the modern world, when it was advertised as "Hungary's 1st Scientific Electrical Theater Modeled on the Grand American Bioscope Awarded the Grand Prix at the World Fair in Paris."

At that time, a linguistic barrier was not crucial to the films' distribution in the multinational Kingdom of Hungary. Silent movies were largely self-explanatory and most people would have been able to understand the few captions in Magyar or German, the two dominant languages in the Kingdom, or have them translated by other viewers. The shows consisted of several separate films, some colorized by hand, each of which were about two minutes long. For example, the first show in Košice was a series of twelve such very, very brief films with titles like "The Arrival of a Train," "The Czar Arrives in Paris," "The Training of the French Infantry," "Four Ladies Dancing the French Cancan" and "An Interrupted Date." Clearly, foreign films dominated Central Europe from the start. The first title was the kind of film intended to create a spectacle — similar to some of the uses of special effects today: the engine would rush towards the camera, scaring an audience not accustomed to viewing images of moving trains at that angle and at such close quarters. The next two titles played a role similar to later newsreels shown before the main feature, or to contemporary world news and documentaries on, say, CNN or the Discovery Channel. The last two titles were of the kind that — the filmmakers found — attracted the largest number of viewers: entertainment, fun and a rudimentary story. The proportion of such shorts quickly grew.

The first permanent movie theater in Bratislava, Elektro Bioskop, was opened in a remodeled fencing hall in September, 1905. It had about 200 seats. The site is still in business. After a hiatus, an arts movie theater was opened in the same hall in the 1970s and is still in operation, now called Mladost' ("Youth"), on Hviezdoslav Square opposite the US Embassy. Theaters, hotel halls, storage buildings and other premises were remodeled in other towns, to become permanent movie theaters. In the absence of hi-fi sound and hi-tech projection systems, the competition often relied on interior decoration. An advertisement for the Bratislava movie theatre Fidelio (later Urania and now Hviezda) lured the audience thus: "427 upholstered seats in 3 colors, Alhambra-style walls decorated with Oriental landscapes, live and man-made flowers." The fact that the theater showed two new releases a week was relegated to the bottom of the page.

Attendance at traditional theater performances dropped after the introduction of motion pictures. Theater directors appealed to the authorities to disallow movie shows during the time of regular plays. In 1901, the Ministry of the Interior (in charge of police and local government in Central Europe) issued a decree meeting their demands. The Viscount of Nitra went so far as to ban movie shows during the whole theater season, but the local movie-theater operators successfully appealed his decision. For a time, film producers thought they could benefit from a symbiosis of film and theater in "cinema-sketches." Actors would play on the stage, then the story would be picked up on the screen with the same actors and the conclusion would be played by live actors again.

One such cinema-sketch from 1909 depicted night life in Košice "The Košice Promenade on the Screen." Walking on Main Street in one's Sunday best was a common pastime before the advent of TV and mass entertainment. It was among the few early

motion pictures linked with Slovak territory. The limited production of cinema-sketches did not survive World War I and did not continue after the creation of Czecho-Slovakia (later renamed Czechoslovakia) in 1918.

Rather than cinema-sketches or story-based films, most of the early films linked to Slovakia were travel specials with titles like "The High Tatras," "Skiing in Tatranská Lomnica," "Traveling through the Váh Valley," or "The Košice Institute of Corrections for Children," "Testing the Police Dogs in Bratislava," and news.

Movies proved successful. The number of movie theaters in Slovakia reached about 100 by the end of World War I and two schools — the Mining Academy in Banská Štiavnica and a high school in Lučenec — had already used film as a teaching tool. When movies were still shown by traveling entrepreneurs, a copy of the film was bought and owned by them. With the establishment of permanent movie theaters, film distributors appeared, as well as a kind of 'film exchange' where copies of film were traded as on the stock market. The advent of copyright problems and foreign competition was heralded in 1913, in the first published complaint about illegal importation of foreign films, especially from France. As elsewhere in Central Europe, French films dominated the market.

Legal power to regulate what movies were screened in Hungary was invested in the hands of the local authorities by a law from 1901, which required the traveling movie entrepreneurs to obtain permits for their shows. On the whole, a license was issued to anyone who applied for it. Local bans and complaints surfaced for a variety of reasons, including some familiar today. A city councilor in Košice worried that worthless caper movies had a bad influence on boys, while dramas about sex ruined girls, because such movies extinguished their sense of morality and made

them vulnerable to unconscionable seducers. In 1912, a priest and principal of a Roman Catholic boys' school in Nitra threatened his students with a bad grade in behavior if they went to the movies, even if accompanied by their parents. His ban extended to traditional theater performances as well. Censorship was also exercised by the authorities in Budapest, the capital of the Kingdom, who were able to ban individual titles from being shown all over Hungary, including the Slovak counties.

In line with the traditions of Central European monarchies, politics was among the reasons for censorship. Among the banned titles were "King Ludwig II," depicting a story too similar to the life and mysterious death of Ludwig II of Bavaria and a film offensive to the prime minister of Hungary. However, the Kingdom did not follow suit when the rest of the Habsburg monarchy introduced formal film censorship in 1912. Among other things, it required that a license to open a movie theater be issued to individuals and institutions that would secure a respectable use of the profits. Its intent was to support charities and various associations. Budapest adopted the law in April of 1918, half a year before the defeat and collapse of Austria-Hungary and the founding of Czecho-Slovakia. The law empowered the censors to ban films offending patriotic interests, public order and morality. Children under sixteen were allowed to see only movies designated as suitable for them and only when accompanied by an adult.

Despite a variety of problems, Czecho-Slovakia proved to be more democratic than the former Kingdom of Hungary and the whole Habsburg monarchy. But the new freedom, which benefited other forms of Slovak culture, proved even more difficult for Slovak film than the post-communist period after 1989. The film industry developed in Prague, which had been an important German-Czech cultural center, a university town and capital of the

Holy Roman Empire's Kingdom of Bohemia for centuries, attracting business and artistic talent. By comparison, Slovakia's new capital and largest city, Bratislava, was much smaller; moreover, it was only forty miles from the former Habsburg monarchy's large, vibrant and influential capital of Vienna. Given that artists and entrepreneurs flocked to it from all over the monarchy, Vienna must have created a degree of artistic brain-drain in its immediate vicinity.

As with the Pittsburgh Agreement of 1918, which was a key document in the separation of the Slovak counties from the Habsburg monarchy, Slovak-Americans had an impact on Slovakia's nascent film industry. Andrej Šustek from Chicago founded the Selig Company with the intent to make historical films in Slovakia. It was subsequently incorporated in the new Slovak-American Tatra Film Corporation with a capital of about \$30,000 from US investors. Their first and only film was *Jánošík*. It captured the legend of an 18th-century highwayman from Terchová in the northern Slovak County of Orava who gave rise to Carpathian legends comparable to those about Robin Hood in England. In 1919 Tatra Film's Daniel and Jaroslav Siakeľ arrived in Slovakia to start filming in their native village of Blatnica near Martin in Central Slovakia, where they also built sets, and in the castle of Štiavnička near Ružomberok. The leading role was given to popular Theodor Pištěk, who starred in nine other films that year. Mária Fábryová, an amateur actress from Martin, played Anka, Jánošík's girlfriend. The film was finished in the A-B studios in Prague.

The screenplay by Jozef Žák-Marušiak was to be based on a novel by Slovak-American author and editor of the popular *Amerikánsko-Slovenské Noviny* "(American-Slovak News)", Gustáv Maršall-Petrovský (1862-1916). But it was much closer to the ac-

tual local legends, which also inspired Slovak Romantic poets in the 19th century. Moreover, the play *Jánošík* — premiered in Brno in 1910 and written by Moravian playwright, poet and journalist Jiří Mahen — was well known by the 1920s and may have been a major source for the film's story. *Jánošík* was shown to the filmmakers' team in November 1921 in the city of Vrútky. It opened a few days later in Žilina and in December 1921 in Chicago — to be more specific, in Cicero, IL, then with a large Slovak-American population, at the Atlantic movie theater, now replaced by the Atlantic Mall at W. 26th St. and S. Pulaski Rd. The screenplay relied on the folk motif of 'taking from the rich and giving to the poor,' and greatly reinforced the hints present in 19th-century Slovak Romantic poems about *Jánošík*: the film fused feudal exploitation in the more distant past with the drive by the Magyar-speaking government in Budapest in the 19th century to suppress the Kingdom's other languages and cultures. The latter became particularly forceful during the last decades of the Kingdom's existence and ultimately contributed to its demise. Unlike feudalism, that experience was still very fresh in people's memories and was among the reasons why Slovaks immigrated to the United States.

By comparison to Czech films preserved from the early Czecho-Slovak period, *Jánošík* showed the authors' experience with American movies: in camera work, in the use of parallel narratives, as well as in shots inspired by Westerns. It had two directors of photography with two cameras: Oldřich Beneš with a European camera and Daniel Siakel', who used a camera made by Andrej Šustek's company in Chicago. In effect, the two cameramen shot two parallel films — scenes were acted separately for each camera and the difference between the "Slovak" and "American" versions increased after separate editing. But the film's handling of the eth-

nic motif may have been too didactic, or the issue too recent to be successfully mythologized as entertainment on the silver screen. *Jánošík* did not recover its costs and remained Tatra Film's only product, as well as Slovakia's first preserved silent movie. It was thought to have been lost, but in 1975 it was discovered and restored from both versions by Ivan Rumanovský in Bratislava.

Until after World War II, attempts to set up film companies, occasionally with Slovak-American involvement, followed the same path. One film would be made and then the company folded, because the film was not profitable and the company lacked sufficient capital to sustain it through a few flops. The situation did not change after the emergence of sound in the movies. While about 30-50 sound films were made each year in Czechoslovakia between 1933 - 1938, fewer than one a year was in Slovak. Czech films occasionally featured Slovak actors. Among them, with eleven musicals to his credit, was František Křištof Veselý, who reached the level of stardom in Czechoslovakia.

Documentaries fared better: partly because the costs were lower and partly thanks to occasional government funding for shorts featuring its officials. For example, *Kvetná neděľa vo Vajnorych* (Palm Sunday in Vajnory) recorded a folkloristic celebration of the holiday attended by Minister Plenipotentiary for Slovakia, Vavro Šrobár. A potentially steady source of funding opened up in 1935 when Prague decided that each newsreel commonly shown before the main feature had to devote at least 20% of its length to items about Czechoslovakia. But this source remained untapped by Slovak filmmakers: most of the reports came from Bohemia and Moravia.

However, government or institutional funding and fascination with village life proved to be a mix that worked for filmmakers in Slovakia on more than one occasion, right through the present.

The first Slovak film to reach international acclaim relied on both. The potential of the Slovak countryside as a backdrop had already been discovered by non-native filmmakers and at least two of their films have become classics of world cinema. The early German horror *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* (Nosferatu the Vampire) directed by Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau was filmed at Orava Castle and in the High Tatras in 1922, and Czech director Gustav Machatý chose Slovakia as a location for his daring exploration of sexuality *Extase* (Ecstasy) in 1932. The second one propelled the career of Hedy Lamarr (born Hedwig Eva Maria Kiesler), who became one of the most successful Hollywood stars.

The *Matica slovenská* (by that time an eminent, mostly government-sponsored cultural, academic and archival institution) employed Karel Plicka (1894-1987) as its ethnographer, who was able to make documentary shorts from about 1926. He obtained funding from the President's Office in 1928 to produce an hour-long documentary about village life *Po horách, po dolách* (Through Mountains and Valleys). It was awarded a Gold Medal at the International Exposition of Photographic Art in Florence and received an Honorable Mention at the International Venice Film Festival in 1932. The favorable reception of his production, along with more funding from both the *Matica slovenská* and the President's Office, enabled Plicka to make *Zem spieva* (The Earth Sings) in 1933, a romanticized semi-documentary panorama of selected folk customs through the four seasons. Unlike Slovak feature movies of that period, *Zem spieva* struck a chord with the audience and topped it with another award at the International Venice Film Festival as part of a collection of films from Czechoslovakia that included *Extase*, mentioned above. But after this success, the *Matica slovenská* was unable to raise sufficient funding and Plicka's hopes that he was laying the foundations of

Slovakia's film industry were thwarted. He went on to make a documentary in the United States *Za Slovákmi od New Yorku po Mississippi* (Tracing Slovaks from New York to the Mississippi) in 1937 and then became a professor in the first Department of Film in Czechoslovakia and the third such department in Europe, at the School of Artistic Crafts in Bratislava in 1938. But the Department's potential for Slovak cinema was lost when the College was closed after Slovakia became a separate country in 1939. Plicka then resettled permanently in Prague, Bohemia, which was incorporated into the Third Reich during World War II.

Czechoslovakia's only other Slovak-language blockbuster before World War II was a new *Jánošík* in 1935, funded from Prague and directed by the Czech Martin Frič (1902-1968). It was indicative of the volume of Czech film production that Frič finished three other films during the same year, having previously directed 23. Frič and Plicka were two of the authors of the screenplay based on the same play by Mahen, mentioned earlier, on which the first *Jánošík* may have been based. Plicka also found a policeman and amateur actor, Paľo Bielik (1910-1983), in the village of Senica for the leading role. The film combined idealized images of villagers with action scenes to show their and Jánošík's resistance against Hungarian landlords. In spite of Budapest's protestations, it was screened at the International Venice Film Festival and was successfully released in Germany.

During the existence of the Slovak Republic (1939-1945), movie theaters grew by more than 60% but no feature films were made. The government sponsored the film company *Nástup* (Line-up), which produced short films and weekly newsreels. The authorities, who described their own rule as "authoritarian and totalitarian," mandated that a newsreel be shown before every feature film and tightened censorship and ideological supervision of

their production. The newsreel was customarily followed by a short film, a pattern that was picked up by the communist authorities after the war and survived through the collapse of Communism. The government's alliance with Germany meant that it became Slovakia's main source of films even before the war changed world trade patterns. At the same time, the number of imports dropped from about 400 a year in the former Czechoslovakia (whose original hyphenated name was restored in 1938) to less than 150 after independence. In 1940, Slovakia still imported 15 "cultural-educational" films from the U.S., and a few more from countries other than Germany, but then German feature films were supplemented by just about a dozen films from Italy and Romania, and several Czech "oldies" from before the war. The film company *Nástup* was conscientious about training its employees, among whom was Paľo Bielik, and sent them regularly to several studios in Germany as interns — including to neighboring Vienna and formerly Czechoslovak Prague, which were now ruled from Berlin.

After World War II, Slovakia was re-joined with the Czech-speaking lands and Czech director Martin Frič returned to make *Varúj...!* (Beware....!) with folkloristic highlights similar to his successful *Jánošík* from 1935. The film was based on Ivan Stodola's popular play *Bačova žena* (The Shepherd's Wife) and Paľo Bielik played the leading role again.

Things changed dramatically after Czechoslovakia became communist in 1948. The government nationalized all but the tiniest companies, including the film studios. It saw film as an important medium to indoctrinate the population and — under strict ideological control — financed film production in the Slovak, as well as in the Czech part of the country. Directors, screenwriters, actors and other people connected with film production became

state employees as everyone else, with a regular salary regardless of how many films were produced and whether they earned any profits or not — a concept born out of communist accounting. Although the authorities paid the salaried filmmakers more money for the films they made — separate contracts were signed for each one — from the American perspective, this was closer to bonuses than anything known in Hollywood today. The “bonuses” were higher for films considered particularly effective in showing the communist rule as benefiting the population and had nothing to do with ticket sales.

The authorities mandated that the method used in all art be socialist realism. In general, its goal was to educate people to the benefits of communism and, before it was reached, socialism, which was what they called their existing political system. This was strictly enforced, especially in fiction and film, because these mediums reached the widest audience. The topics were to emphasize the need to work for the good of the ‘collective,’ i.e., communist society. Topics focusing on the individual and on personal feelings and concerns were deemed harmful, as was depicting anything negative about society. Love was considered such a topic: not only because it was personal and, therefore, did not educate the audience about the benefits of working on behalf of the collective, but also because it may have brought sex into the story, a definite ‘no’ in socialist realism.

The official support of socialist-realist art and the transformation of filmmakers into salaried employees meant that a steady stream of feature films began to appear in the newly-established studios in Bratislava. Paľo Bielik, the former star of *Jánošík*, who expanded his moviemaking experience in the newsreel studios during World War II, directed *Vlčie diery* (Wolves’ Lairs), one of the first two films made after the communist takeover in 1948. It

was the beginning of a succession of films about the 1944 anti-German uprising in Slovakia, but because it was made so early during the Communist Party's drive to establish ideological dominance, the film still managed to include 'negative,' as well as 'positive' characters among both the Slovak insurgents and the German soldiers suppressing the uprising — something that did not get past the censors again for more than a decade. Bielik, as director, leaned away from the folkloristic style of the films in which he starred: the style of *Vlčie diery* was inspired by early Italian neo-realism.

After two feature films in 1948 and another two in 1949, the yearly output grew to 3-6 per year in the 1950s. 'Negative' characters could not be central in the plots, and the story had to prove them wrong. Central characters had to be 'positive' from the start or be seen discovering Marxist-Leninist solutions to any problems they encountered. Such problems had to be few and marginal, the general view of society had to be happy. If the central characters were not Communists from the start, a 'tutor' and Communist Party member would often be present, who helped them find the Marxist-Leninist way. Topics commonly dealt with World War II and the defeat of Nazi Germany, or with the imposition of Communism — the 'collectivization' of farms, i.e., the abolition of private ownership of most land larger than the immediate surroundings of one's house and garden. Farmers were to be shown as opening their eyes to the fact that this was actually good for them. The Communists proclaimed a classless society, which meant that everyone would eventually become a 'worker.' The three recognized social groups were the laborers, the farmers, and the intelligentsia, i.e., white-collar workers and college-educated people, but the Communist Party officials, although working in offices, classified themselves as laborers. The bourgeoisie,

i.e., the private entrepreneurs, disappeared by virtue of their property being 'nationalized,' i.e., taken over by the government, but the — now former — bourgeoisie were persecuted nevertheless. The intelligentsia was often suspected of harboring bourgeois ideas and persecuted, too.

Since the bourgeoisie were often described as incapable of shedding their reactionary, i.e. anti-Communist skins, films about contemporary life generally focused on the villages and farmers. Marxism-Leninism saw in them the 'next best class' after the laborers, on their way to becoming agricultural laborers. Their initial qualms about any benefits of collectivization provided some meager source of conflict for the plots. The films about the past often returned to the uprising in Slovakia during World War II, which was depicted as organized by the Communists and aided by the Soviet Union.

Plots that concerned the communist period had to end on an optimistic note. Since a former entrepreneur always remained at least suspect, their joyful transformation into a group auxiliary to the working class was essentially unacceptable as a topic, which — in effect — also kept towns and cities away from most of the scripts. Even socialist-realist authors felt that a conflict drives a story, but avoided settings that did not provide for politically acceptable conflicts. Socialist realism was strongly enforced during the first 10-15 years of communism.

Unlike neighboring Poland and Hungary, communist Czechoslovakia saw little of the ideological thaw triggered by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalinism in February of 1956. The thaw did not reach Czechoslovakia until the early 1960s, during which time Bratislava produced 6-10 feature films per year, and the first manifestations of the thaw in literature and film came from Slovakia. After more than a decade of socialist-

realist filmmaking, *Slnko v sieti* (The Sun in a Net) directed by Štefan Uher (1930-1993) in 1962 became a milestone in both Slovak and Czech filmmaking. It inspired a whole generation of students at the Film Academy in Prague, who soon followed with a series of films which attained international recognition as the “Czech New Wave.”

Slnko v sieti was Štefan Uher's second film. His first was about the life of a group of fifteen year-old students and their school *My z deviatej A* (We from Grade 9, Study Group A; 1961). The screenwriter, Alfonz Bednár (1914-1989), was a successful writer who published mildly non-conformist fiction somewhat earlier than most other authors. The film is based on his three short stories *Fajolov príspevok* (Fajolo's Contribution), *Pontónový deň* (Pontoon Day) and *Zlatá brána* (Golden Gate).

Uher's film depicted a number of hitherto unacceptable social and political themes: distant — perhaps uncaring — parents, a philandering husband, teenagers changing partners, an attempt at suicide, a poorly-run collectivized farm, and the requirement that a child attend summer ‘voluntary work camps’ to make up for his parents belonging to the *intelligentsia*. Moreover, none of these issues were resolved in a ‘positive’ manner. The ending was rather somber, if not depressing, with the barest hint of optimism found only in the last sentence and possibly on the film's symbolic level, which was handled rather unevenly. It attempted a complex interplay of sun and clouds, vision and blindness, truth and lies, centered around a solar eclipse (Central Europe actually experienced a 95% solar eclipse on the morning of February 15, 1961). Contemporary critics found the symbolism difficult to decipher, and much of it was probably lost on the viewers. But the core story line — the ups and downs in the relationship of two teenagers — the realism and novelty of its urban setting, and the

hints at some social and political taboos were not lost on the audience and cannot have been lost on the censors. *Slnko v sieti* not only pushed the envelope, but also established for other artists and showed to the Slovaks and Czechs at large what the authorities could now be pushed to permit. According to Uher, Karol Bacílek, the head of the Communist Party in Slovakia at that time, attacked the film, saying it contained coded messages that conspirators were able to decipher precisely. For example, Bacílek thought the solar eclipse was to indicate the twilight of communism and the pontoon on the dried-up riverbed stood for the state of communist rule in Czechoslovakia at that time. Communist officials believed that the blind mother was supposed to symbolize the blindness of their Party, which did not see the realities of life under communism. Because a political thaw had begun in Slovakia, other communist officials with enough influence dared to differ and the film was released.

Besides Štefan Uher's efforts to get past the strict requirements of socialist realism, the director was inspired by some of the trends current in Western European cinema and culture in the 1950s. Among them was his focus on the symbolism of light and darkness, adherence to a low-key style, a hint of fashionable quasi-existentialism in Fajolo's dialogues with Bela, and an attempt at serious *cinéma-vérité*: in the beer-drinking scenes in a tavern, the background soundtrack includes taped unscripted conversations of real villagers. Uher mostly chose inexperienced actors or non-actors. Only one of them, Ľubo Roman in a supporting role (b. 1944, then a student of acting), became a successful actor, theater administrator, and ultimately a politician — Member of Parliament, Minister of Culture, and since 2001, County Chief of Bratislava. Actual music in the film included Western rock played on

the radio. The film's score was by Ilja Zeljenka, an avant-garde composer of 'concrete music.'

While *Slnko v sieti* became a prologue to the first minimalist, quasi-realist, and eventually more experimental Czechoslovak New Wave made by film students in Prague, in Slovakia the film was followed by several increasingly critical social commentaries by established filmmakers, by more films about contemporary urban life, and by increasingly intellectual and abstract films seen as Art. The most daring among the films that replaced socialist realism with social criticism was Peter Solan's *Prípád Barnabáš Kos* (The Case of Barnabáš Kos; 1964), which removed the veil from arbitrary decision-making in communist society. Among contemporary topics, a potential for an approachable and successful film was lost with *Nylonový mesiac* (Nylon Moon; 1965) directed by Eduard Grečner. Its story, as well as the title came from a novel by Jaroslava Blažková published in 1960, the first best-seller about contemporary life since the communist takeover. But there was entertainment in film, too, none more popular than *Jánošík II* directed in 1963 by Paľo Bielik, the star in the previous version of the story. In spite of its title, it was not a sequel: the film re-told the centuries-old legend.

The theme of the brigand hero retains its attraction through the present day. Slovakia's most successful producer, Rudolf Bierman, is currently producing *The True Story of Jánošík and Uhorčík*, directed by the successful Polish filmmaker Agnieszka Holland and her daughter Kasia Adamik with an estimated budget of \$2.4 million, \$800,000 of which came from the Slovak Parliament and the Ministry of Culture.

The first film to earn an Oscar for Czechoslovakia was *Obchod na korze* (The Shop on Main Street; 1965; Academy Award for Best Foreign Film in 1966; Special Mention for Acting

Performance, Cannes Film Festival 1965; New York Film Critics Circle Award for Best Foreign Film in 1966). It was co-directed by Slovak Ján Kádár and Czech Elmar Klos, who had directed films together since the 1950s. Their earlier film was the groundbreaking *Smrt' sa volá Engelchen* (Death is Called Engelchen, 1963) based on a novel by Ladislav Mňačko, which diverted from the communist interpretation of the 1944 uprising in Slovakia as infallibly glorious and showed some aspects that brought about human tragedy. Along similar lines, *Obchod na korze* placed the politics of World War II in the background and focused on the dead-end street faced by many in Central Europe during the deportations of the Jews to German concentration camps. After the introduction of anti-Jewish laws in Slovakia, a simple carpenter named Tono is made the owner of a tiny haberdashery, until then owned by an old, almost deaf Jewish woman named Rozália who has no comprehension of the contemporary political developments. After a crisis, the local Jewish community begins to pay Tono not to surrender his ownership, to prevent Rozália's store from being passed on to a ruthless Aryanizer. A tender friendship develops between Tono and Rozália: she keeps selling buttons without realizing Tono's legal status, and he becomes her man about the house. When deportations begin, Rozália remains oblivious of real life, and Tono is faced with the choice between sending her off, or probably facing his own and his wife's death, if he were discovered trying to hide a person incapable of understanding why she should live in hiding. The film starred Slovak Jozef Króner (1924-1998) and Polish Ida Kamińska (1899-1980) with a Slovak cast and was shot on location in the town of Trebišov, Eastern Slovakia, and in the Prague studios. The film presents its captivating, morally complex story in a straightforward style, with a sprinkling of symbolism and dream

sequences. It was an indication of changes in the political climate that *Obchod na korze* was able to get away without the mandated focus on criticism of the Slovak authorities during World War II, previously an inevitable feature of socialist realist work about that period, as well as without highlighting a central, resolute pro-communist character. It has remained the most awarded and internationally successful Slovak film to the present day.

The late 1960s reflected the direction filmmaking may take with little censorship and steady funding. An increasing number of — especially younger — filmmakers took advantage of the situation to experiment without concern about a need to target a specific audience or about how large their audience was going to be. They enjoyed the same creative luxury as the writers or painters convinced of the significance of their work, who manage to earn their living elsewhere. In a democratic society, this is rarely the case in cinema because of the extraordinary amounts of money even a low-budget film requires. But during the occasional relaxation of control in communist countries while the principles of the system remained in place, filmmakers were given substantial funds to make films relatively free from prescription, as well as of a need to bring in profit.

An early nonconformist film seen mostly by students in art theaters was Štefan Uher's *Panna zázračnica* (The Miraculous Virgin, 1966), soon followed by Juraj Jakubisko's (b. 1938) *Kristove roky* ("Christ's Years" or "Crucial Years," 1967), Elo Havetta's *Slávnosť v botanickej záhrade* (A Celebration in the Botanical Garden, 1969), and Dušan Hanák's 322 (the number identifying cancer in medical statistics of diseases, 1969). During this period (however brief) of almost total collapse of communist control, the Koliba Film Studio in Bratislava co-produced films with avant-garde filmmakers from abroad. Jerzy Skolimowski from Poland,

whose government was then significantly more repressive than Czechoslovakia, directed one story in *Dialóg 20-40-60*, along with Czech Zbyněk Brynych and Slovak Peter Solan in 1968. Frenchman Alain Robbe-Grillet directed two films, including *Muž, ktorý luže* (The Man Who Lies, *L'homme qui ment*; co-directed with Martin Hollý in 1968) with a Slovak and French cast. And 1969 saw the release of Juraj Jakubisko's *Vtáčkovia, siroty a blázni* (Birds, Orphans and Fools), considered by most Slovaks to be the best Slovak film. Jakubisko's preferences bounce between experiment, abstraction and ambitious intellectualism, as in this film, and less numerous popular crowd-pleasers.

"*Birds, Orphans and Fools*" had the briefest of theater runs, not because of the audience, but because of the authorities. Conceived when communist control was at its weakest in Czechoslovakia, it was completed well after the Soviet-led invasion in August of 1968, by which time many of the mechanisms of authoritarian rule were at work again. *Vtáčkovia, siroty a blázni* takes place in an apparent historical vacuum in a desolate world with war raging somewhere outside the camera's field of vision and the director's focus. The two male and one female central characters, not unlike some of the hippies in the U.S.A. at that time, live in a decrepit apartment, go through a series of bizarre encounters, sexual experiences and discuss a range of topics. When their lives begin to appear closer to normalcy, one of them murders the girl and commits suicide. The film is deliberately experimental in its style: it varies screen sizes, shots are taken at awkward angles with a hand-held or agitated camera, distortion lenses alter screen images, filmmakers' equipment remains in the frame, characters talk to the camera. The adjectives surrealist and post-apocalyptic are perhaps representative of the filmmakers' intent.

The 1970s witnessed a re-introduction of strict communist control in Czechoslovakia, called normalization. People were demoted at work or fired, if they had expressly supported the relaxation in the late 1960s or denounced the Soviet-led invasion in 1968, and their children often suffered, too. In an effort to avoid repercussions, many repudiated their past views. Although persecution was somewhat milder in Slovakia than in the Czech-speaking areas, it had a stifling effect on art. Gone were the efforts of the 1960s to push the envelope of what was allowed. The population at large had learned its lesson: with the help of the Soviet Union, the Communists were able to pull the whole country back from unprecedented freedom of expression and the brink of a multi-party system in 1968 to a situation more reminiscent of the late 1950s, and those who resisted were punished. This repression lasted at least through the late 1970s, and Czechoslovakia remained more politically backward, although with a better standard of living, than Communist Poland or Hungary until the collapse of communism in 1989.

Cinema was affected like the rest of society, while the number of film releases grew. Slovakia produced 8-12 films per year throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Jakubisko still managed to finish *Dovidenia v pekle, priatel'ia* (See You in Hell, Friends) in 1970, but hardly anyone saw it. The film was banned and Jakubisko was not allowed to make another feature film until 1979. Although the early 1970s are sometimes compared to the 1950s, the authorities did not demand that Slovak filmmakers make socialist-realist films critical of the period of relaxation — the way films in the 1950s tried to discredit private enterprise and democracy which were abolished in 1948. Only one film was made about 1968, *Horúčka* (Fever) directed by Martin Hollý, Jr. (b. 1931) and based on a novel by Jozef Kot. In a country with

freedom of expression, the film could have been perceived as just focusing on a relatively plausible plot from 1968 and pushing a particular point of view — there indeed were people who did not support the pro-democratic reforms, or saw many flaws among the reformers. But under totalitarian control, which did not allow opposing points of view, it was impossible to distinguish the touting of the official view in film from just propaganda. Regardless, *Horúčka* shared the destiny of the overwhelming majority of Slovak and Czech films produced during the forty years of Communism: after a couple of weeks in mostly empty theaters, it was not seen again.

While the 1960s witnessed a desire to bring contemporary and urban themes to film, the 1970s began to solidify an inclination among a segment of the Slovak critics and filmmakers to emulate the centuries-old urban fashion in Europe of the 'return to nature:' well educated intellectuals living in Bratislava make and admire films with images of the countryside and villagers whose lives appear to be somehow more authentic than in towns. The trend-setter was the still admired hour-long documentary *Obrazy starého sveta* (Pictures of the Old World, 1972) directed by Dušan Hanák who, suspicious to the authorities because of his films from the 1960s, found an early refuge in a topic sufficiently removed from big politics to survive in the margins of official production and yet, sufficiently non-conformist and enamored with village life to please especially the chic audiences. Part of its additional attraction within the context of Communist Czechoslovakia rested in the fact that it offered snapshots from the lives of several highlanders, whose very existence belied the official claims of equal wealth for everyone. But *Obrazy starého sveta* has a much more universal appeal and has received critical acclaim from Slovakia, Switzerland and France to Toronto and Los Angeles.

A singular exception among about 90 domestic feature films that briefly flickered in Slovak theaters in the 1970s was Dušan Hanák's *Ružové sny* (Rosy Dreams, 1976). Although its style was poetic, it may have been the first film in the communist bloc with a de-romanticized portrayal of the Roma (Gypsies). It dove into the cultural barriers between them and the non-Romany population — an issue that, twenty years later, proved to be one of the key problems of post-communist societies in Central Europe. Two teenagers — a young Slovak postman and a Romany girl — fall in love. The film tells the viewers that it will not work due to different cultural expectations each of the two have of their budding relationship. Its imaginative filmmaking and affecting, slightly sentimental story might have been easy to understand and appreciate by a wider audience, but *Ružové sny* was shown only in limited release at the order of the authorities. The most popular film in that decade was yet another variation on the legend about a heroic highwayman *Pacho, hybský zbojník* (Pacho, the Highwayman of Hybe; 1975) directed by Martin Ľapák.

In 1980, the authorities shelved *Ja milujem, ty miluješ* (I Love, You Love) directed by Dušan Hanák because of its focus on marginal social groups and eroticism. When it was released shortly before the collapse of communism, it received the highest international recognition for a Slovak film since *The Shop on Main Street*, including the Silver Bear at the Berlin Film Festival.

However, the strict Communist control typical of the 1970s began to relax slowly, and the early 1980s brought two domestic blockbusters whose role in Slovak culture finally matched that of some of the films in the 1960s. In 1982 Štefan Uher directed *Pásla kone na betóne* ("She Grazed Horses on Concrete," or "A Ticket to Heaven"). The title used the first few words from an irreverent tune with just a few verses depicting impossible acti-

vities — the song continues “...she bathed in razor blades.” The story is about a single mother fending for herself in an East Slovak village, determined not to allow her teenaged daughter to follow in her footsteps. Partly a comedy and partly a candid portrayal of contemporary village life, it oscillates between humorous depictions of social customs and ceremonies, and the more serious issues of a woman’s capacity to hold her own in a small community, and of abortion. Although co-written and directed by Uher, the film is largely the work of Milka Zimková, an author and actress, who wrote the original story, worked with Uher on the script, and starred in the leading role. Among the novelties in Slovak moviemaking was an extensive use of the East Slovak dialect in the film. Although Slovak has several highly recognizable regional accents, filmmakers — before and after this film — have the actors speak the standard, neutral variety of Slovak common in the news media, regardless of where in Slovakia the story of their film takes place.

A success comparable to the handful of foreign blockbusters permitted by the authorities each year was Juraj Jakubisko’s *Tisíc-ročná včela* (A Thousand-Year Old Bee; 1983). It is a 162-minute long saga of the life of a farmer’s family covering three generations from the late 1800s through the early 1900s. It picked up on and reinforced a myth recurrent in Slovak cinema for several decades, in films from both popular and artsy filmmakers. Villagers are mostly good, while those who live in or move to town (perhaps the screenwriters and directors bowed to communist authorities) become entrepreneurial and turn out to be cold and corrupt. It was the first Slovak film with a comprehensive narrative that a large number of viewers were ready to perceive as their national, as well as local and family past, because it echoed themes they had encountered in literature and history classes at school.

Moreover, it was a comforting past. The title was a parable, overplayed in the film with brief expensive special effects with a gigantic honey-bee created in the Bavarian Film Studios in Munich. Those sequences hammered in the symbolic thread in the storyline. They could have been be richer and more content, the film gave the viewers to understand, were it not for the cumulative effects of past injustice: the fruits of their hard-working ancestors' labor was periodically taken away from them for a thousand years, like honey from the bees. But as long as they stayed in the villages, they were an honest, sometimes whimsical bunch doing as well as they could. It helped that several popular actors starred in the film, including Jozef Króner (Tono in *The Shop on Main Street*). *Tisícročná včela* received a Gold Phoenix for art and cinematography from the Cultural Center of the City of Venice awarded in tandem with the prestigious International Venice Film Festival.

After decades of government-funded and censored production, Bratislava still produced twelve films in 1990, the year after the collapse of Communism. With no censorship, but also hardly any funding, the number of feature films ranged between one and three for most of the 1990s. Slovakia's theaters are now flooded with foreign, especially American, films and while the population might be ready for a domestic production addressing them specifically, perhaps along the lines of *A Thousand-Year Old Bee*, there is not enough money for a film on that scale, and perhaps even less interest on the part of the filmmakers. With one exception, the films made in the 1990s generally follow one of two thematic lines. The most successful film was *Fontána pre Zuzanu 2* (*A Fountain for Susan 2*; 1993) directed by Dušan Rapoš as a sequel to his more sedate *Fontána pre Zuzanu* from 1985, still limited by communist censorship. He released *Fontána pre Zuzanu*

nu 3 in 1999. Both fall in the group of films with contemporary themes and are obviously interested in generating ticket sales. They rely on sex and crime to achieve that. Although it remained behind major foreign blockbusters, *Fontána pre Zuzanu 2* sold 380,000 tickets in a country with 5.4 million inhabitants, which is comparable to a film that brings in over \$130 million in the U.S.A. *Titanic* sold about 550,000 tickets in Slovakia and *The Matrix* 130,000.

Another film with a contemporary theme is indicative of how times have changed since the collapse of communism. *Rivers of Babylon* (the title is in English) directed by Vladimír Balco in 1998 was based on the first post-communist bestseller in 1990 by Peter Pišťánek. Sequels of the novel had lower sales, because the novelty of the topic — Bratislava's underworld — and expressive presentation wore off, and because they had to compete with a growing number of translated foreign bestsellers. However, the filmmakers picked up on a particular aspect of the sequels — vitriolic political commentary. The story of the rise of a skillful stoker and wheeler-dealer to political power was seen as a parable of the government in Bratislava at that time. Only about eight years earlier, a release of such a strongly critical film would have been either unthinkable, or a major event attracting huge crowds. Yet, *Rivers of Babylon* sold only 50,000 tickets and met with a lukewarm reception abroad.

The other thematic line in contemporary Slovak cinema is the 'return to nature.' Its main protagonist is director Martin Šulík (b. 1962) whose films generally attract fewer viewers at home than *Rivers of Babylon*, but are favored by critics and have attained a degree of viewers' acclaim at film festivals organized by European cities. His most successful *Záhrada* (Garden; 1995), the earlier *Neha* (Tenderness; 1991), as well as the more recent *Orbis*

Pictus (Latin title, 1997) and *Krajinka* ("Landscape" or "A Small piece of the Country," 2000) are intellectualized continuations of the theme of the desirability of a return to, journey through, or life in a rural setting. *Krajinka* is the most accessible of Šulík's films. Although it may be based on memories, as the opening sequence suggests, the discrete stories are not made to gel into a cohesive sequence for the audience. But each is readable on its own. *Záhřada*, the first Slovak film since the collapse of communism to be released abroad, and especially *Orbis Pictus*, break with traditional story-telling and show the main characters — a rather passive adult man living with his parents in *Záhřada* and a young girl released from a boarding school, perhaps for abandoned teenagers, in *Orbis Pictus* — find education in nature and disappointment in urban settings.

With surreal scenes, philosophizing scripts, and a dedication to the filmmaker's expressive whim, Šulík's films re-package the theme of national rural bliss, recurrent in Slovak culture and education, in a form palatable for trendy audiences. The theme has had an incessant, powerful attraction for a segment of directors since the beginnings of filmmaking in Slovakia, whether they have leaned towards the popular and mythologizing approach — from *The Earth Sings* 1933, through the decades of films about Jánošík and similar productions, to *The Thousand-Year Old Bee* — or whether they take the approach aimed at art theaters, traceable to *Organ* directed by Štefan Uher in 1964. Due to the general drop in film production and to Martin Šulík's capacity to attract funding, films for art theatres have become more prevalent in the 1990s than in the earlier decades.

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DOCUMENTATION

DOCUMENTATION:

Sketches from a Slovak Catholic Parish in Pittston, PA [1900]

by Matúš Jankola

(Translated by M. Mark Stolarik)¹

A nice, transparent picture is what you wish, I know.² However, that will be impossible. It is very difficult to write something short and interesting about our life here. I would, indeed, like to present you with something short, but our American conditions

¹ The Rev. Matúš Jankola (1872, Budapest - 1916, Bridgeport, CT) was one of the most important leaders of Slovak Catholics in America. He emigrated to the USA with his family in 1893 and was consecrated a priest in 1895. He then served his people in Slovak parishes in Pittston, Wilkes-Barre and, from 1907 to his death in Bridgeport, Connecticut. A strong Slovak nationalist, Jankola served for a while as president of the First Catholic Slovak Union, he founded the Society of Slovak Priests in the USA, and, most important of all, the teaching order of the Sisters of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Danville, PA. When World War I broke out Jankola supported the destruction of Austria-Hungary and the creation of a federal Czecho-Slovak Republic. I have translated into English and reprinted his article on "Črty z katolíckej slovenskej farnosti v Pittston, PA", *Tovaryšstvo*, III (Ružomberok, Slovakia, 1900), 301-05 for the benefit of our readers because it contains very valuable observations and insights into the early life of Slovak-Americans. For more on Jankola's life see Jozef Paučo, *Matúš Jankola, kňaz a národovec* (Danville, PA, 1959).

² Jankola wrote this article in response to a request from the Rev. František Richard Osvald, publisher and editor of *Tovaryšstvo*.

could fill the entire issue of *Tovaryšstvo*; nevertheless I will leave space for people more important than me. I would also like to reassure our nervous Lords [in Hungary] that they will find nothing "American" in my article which should cause them to worry.

The Immense Size of the United States. With your permission I will begin with Adam and Eve, because I cannot do otherwise. The United States are truly strange with its people, customs, with its climate and untold wealth, and immense size. It is as far from New York to San Francisco as it is across the Atlantic Ocean--three days by train. If we were to compare this huge republic with Hungary, the former would be like a large, fat cat, and the latter like a mouse. For instance, *Johnson's Universal Encyclopedia* gives the following statistics: the United States (including Alaska) covers 3,595,000 square miles whereas Hungary covers only 125,000 square miles. The state of Texas is composed of 265,780 square miles, while Austria-Hungary comprises only 264,204 square miles. Thus, the United States is 28 1/2 times larger than Hungary. Approximately a quarter of a million Slovaks live all over this huge country, and my parish is but a tiny dot.

Slovak oases. One can find Slovaks all over the United States, especially in commercial and industrial cities. Our colonies resemble oases in the Sahara. They are especially noticeable in the coal regions of Pennsylvania. The vast majority of our people work in the soft and hard coal mines. So, for instance, one will find Slovaks in the 150-mile stretch from Carbondale all the way to Shamokin, in the finest hard-coal region of the world. Some of the seams of coal are up to twenty-five feet thick! This area is full of breakers sitting on mine shafts. It is the "Eldorado" of coal, and it employs upwards of 80,000 workers. Fifteen years ago you could count the number of Slovaks here on your fingers, today

there are thousands. They are well-organized into 200 branches of fraternal-benefit societies, twelve Roman Catholic parishes, an equal number of Greek Catholic ones, and four Lutheran parishes.

The Diocese of Scranton. It is the most "Slovak" of all dioceses in America, with 10 Slovak parishes served by eight Roman Catholic priests, and an equal number of Greek Catholics. We Roman Catholics also have our own schools, but not everywhere. The Greek Catholic priests, on the other hand, do not care about having their own schools. We have Roman Catholic parishes in the following towns and cities: in Oliphant (founded in 1889) under the patronage of the Holy Ghost, with a filial parish in Jessup (founded in 1896) under the patronage of St. Michael; in Scranton (founded in 1895) under the patronage of the Holy Family; in Plymouth (founded in 1886) under the patronage of St. Stephen the King; in Wilkes-Barre (founded in 1895) under the patronage of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; in Freeland (founded in 1893) under the patronage of St. John Nepomucene; in Nanticoke (founded in 1888) under the patronage of St. Joseph; in Hazleton (founded in 1883) under the patronage of St. Joseph; in Pittston (founded in 1894) under the patronage of St. John the Baptist, with a filial parish in Maltby (founded in 1895) under the patronage of the Holy Trinity. At the moment we are building a church dedicated to Sts. Cyril and Methodius as a filial of Plymouth. The author of this article organized the parishes in Wilkes-Barre and Maltby.

Pittston and Other Matters. In the northern portion of Luzerne County (each county has a court house which can impose the death penalty) is a beautiful valley drained by the Susquehanna River, which resembles the Váh river at Komárno. The valley is approximately 20 miles long and two miles wide. It

contains the best coal, and boasts 40 breakers; The breakers and the mines below them are owned by small and large corporations. Various nationalities work here: Slovaks, Poles, Lithuanians, Italians; the Irish, Scots and Welsh are regarded as Americans, since they speak English, and our people do not. This "Wyoming Valley" has 130,000 inhabitants. Its most important cities are Wilkes-Barre, with 60,000 people, Pittston with 15,000, Nanticoke and Plymouth with 12,000. We Slovaks number more than 8,000. Surrounding these cities, as chicks surround their mother hens, are scattered the various villages and "places" where most of our countrymen live, because the housing is cheaper there. The houses that they rent are of clapboard construction and consist of 3-4 rooms, with a kitchen, and give them some freedom.

The entire population depends upon the coal industry, because there is no other. When coal is in demand, there is plenty of work and good times, and the miner can earn up to \$80.00 per month, or more. It all depends upon how many wagons of coal he can fill; at other times earnings are skimpy: \$10.00 to \$20.00 per month, or less. In hard times, people work only 2-3 days a week, and goof off the rest of the time. Even Vienna has beggars! The miner requires \$4.00 to \$8.00 a month to clothe and feed himself, his wife and children, and during hard times he often falls into debt. When winter comes the mines usually come alive, and the miner can pay off his debts. That's when the butcher, the grocer and saloonkeeper are paid off.

The Jewish saloonkeeper is like a white raven in America. Here a Slovak can open his own business with a few hundred dollars in capital, become a businessman, and move up to a higher class, just like in Hungary, when one becomes an aristocrat. Our

brothers like to drink in America as well, so there are lots of saloons. Our comrades in the "wet" districts like to run up a tab, and promise to pay up on pay day. However, all saloonkeepers complain that they are owed more than they care to mention. It is impossible to collect on such a debt because state laws do not recognize it. Our saloonkeepers sell not only beer but also whiskey. Slovaks drink only the cheapest brand, which costs \$1.25 a gallon and is pure poison! A gallon of good whiskey costs \$4.00 to \$6.00, but our people avoid it because it is not "strong" enough!

Our Shortcomings. The most important day in the entire month is payday. Other industries pay twice a month. Here, it comes only once a month. On payday evening there is happiness and good cheer, and the saloonkeepers have their harvest, as does the devil. The "places" and "patches" are the most lively, because they have no police constables. Many houses are full of noise, laughter and singing, because Slovaks love to sing, but this merrymaking often ends in sadness. The "finale" is usually a fight, jail, a fine, and judgment. The largest beneficiaries are the squires and lawyers. These squabbles have often ended with the death penalty or life imprisonment. The day after one often finds in front of homes, or saloons, empty 50-litre kegs, drained of their beer and resembling cannons in Ladysmith. In recent times, however, things have gotten better—people do not have much money, they are more careful, and all nationalities are organized into fraternal-benefit societies and parishes. We shouldn't be surprised by such behaviour, because the hungry do not know moderation, they stuff themselves until they get sick. Not all Slovaks behave like animals on payday. Usually it is only the bachelors, who live as boarders. Some Slovak homes contain as many as 12 boarders who pay \$2.00 to \$3.00 per month for room and board. The poor owner of the house has to suffer much abuse because, if he

becomes too strict, the boarders will go elsewhere. The morality of these boarders is rapidly deteriorating (only a minority is upright). Many are married, but while their wives are enjoying themselves in Slovakia, their husbands are having a good time in America. Some drink too much, and do not go to work until they are penniless. They won't hear of going to church or to confession, with the excuse that their church is in the Old Country, as is their pastor, and they will go to him when they return. How many of them have already died in sin!

The mines are very dangerous. Death comes as easily here as pears falling from a shaking tree. Every day one hears about someone being burned by coal gas, being crushed by coal or rocks, and killed. The hospitals in Wilkes-Barre and Pittston are full of such patients. It is fairly common to see people on the street who are missing hands, legs or who are crippled in some way. In America it is appalling to see so much human tragedy; life here is worth nothing.

Another failing of our people is that they are very argumentative and sue each other. In parishes they claim that, because they financially support the church, they are free to criticize the priest, his behaviour, his sermons, his orders and his general handling of matters (especially financial ones). The Poles are "masters" at this game, they are leaving the Church and have even established a large number of national, independent parishes free from Irish bishops. Our Slovaks are a more humble, they will grumble, criticize, but then give way. If other nationalities did not set a bad example for them, our Slovaks would be quiet. Here, too, the proverb "The sheep are like the shepherd," holds true. These are the faults of our Slovaks. However, the Slovaks also have a lot of

good qualities, but I don't need to list them, because they are obvious to all who see.

My parish. Twenty years ago there wasn't a single Slovak soul here. No Slovaks, except me, live in the city of Pittston itself. The nearest Slovaks have to walk about twenty minutes to get to church. For this reason, I have one of the worst parishes in America. Whenever it is cold, or it rains, I always fear that few people will show up in church. My parishioners live in seven "places" around Pittston. These are: West Pittston, with seven families; Sturmerville, with about 40 families; Wyoming, with ten families; in Port Griffith, with about 40 families; Smithville, with 24 families; Duryea, with about 16 families; and Pittston Junction with 14 families. About 30 of them own their homes. Three or four parishioners own 3-4 homes.

The majority of my parishioners hail from Spiš County in Slovakia. For instance, Port Griffith houses Slovaks predominantly from the northern Spiš region of "pod Magura" (from the villages of Nedeca, Tripš, Vyšný and Nižný Lapš, Kacvin, Čierna Hora and so on.).³ Others come from Abauj, Zemplín, Šariš and Užhorod counties. Only a few originate in Orava or Trenčín counties. These statistics cover only parishioners, that is, those who regularly support the church. About 200 boarders, plus 60 families support my parish. Another 200-300 boarders never set foot in the church, and are not parishioners.

In America there are three kinds of Catholics. The majority are good, they fulfil their Christian duty, live as Christians, support their parish and priest, the organist and so on. Then you have the lukewarm Catholics, who hem and haw; and finally, the boarders, who don't give a hoot, live a carefree life, pay no

³ This region was ceded by Czecho-Slovakia to Poland after World War I in spite of the fact that the majority of its inhabitants identified themselves as Slovaks.

attention to their souls, and plan to live a Christian life only in the Old Country! To this group also belong the "enlightened ones" and various other individuals.

You might be surprised that I can give you only an estimate of the number of my parishioners. That's because our people are always looking for better work, and always on the move, like the Jews. In my Annual Spiritual Report for the Bishop I estimated 800 "souls." The Slovaks care about their religion in spite of the fact that they are abroad and have to fend for themselves in a land which proclaims "liberty of conscience" and has many temptations. We have no patrons, no foundations, no church property, and the state does not support us. The people have to take the initiative, build their churches, and support their priests and bishops by themselves. Priests are paid between \$600 and \$1,000 yearly and the parishes have to pay a church tax to the bishop of between \$25 and \$200 per month (my poor parish pays only \$50 per month). In America we have a sixth Commandment: support your parishes.

How do Slovaks support their churches and parishes in America? In various ways. Where there is no debt or where there are a lot of parishioners, they contribute in small amounts. In some places parishioners pay up to \$1.00 monthly, in other places 75 or 50 cents or only 25 cents (as for instance, in Freeland). With me families generally pay 75 cents and individuals 50 cents, for a total of about \$6.00 per year. In addition, because this year we will be building a church (our present church was purchased from the Germans and is too small and ugly), families are supposed to contribute an additional \$10.00 and individuals \$5.00 more per year. In some parishes these monthly contributions are gathered by "collectors", in others, such as in Irish churches, the people

bring the money directly to the parish. We have two "collectors" at each location and, as soon as payday arrives, they visit every Slovak home and collect their dues. I went out collecting for the new church myself on two occasions. That's how it is in America! All gifts go into the parish treasury and all expenses are paid out of it: the building, the priest, the organist, the churchwarden, and the church and rectory decorations. The American priest, who is really a missionary, owns only his vestments and his books. He simply cannot afford to own any furniture or other material that he would have to transport from parish to parish.

Ownership—the role of the priest. All churches, schools, cemeteries and so on are church property and are registered in the name of the bishop in trust. In our parish the property is registered in the land registry office as follows: St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Congregation in Pittston, PA, in trust of the Rt. Rev. M.J. Hoban, Bishop of Scranton, PA. In other places the property is registered directly in the name of the bishop, or in the name of the bishop and the parish council; that depends on diocesan laws and state laws. The bishop does not concern himself with parish finances unless a problem appears in the annual report. In my case I control everything. The parish finances are in my name and I write the checks. Once a year I call a meeting of the parish collectors, who are also the trustees, and I show them the books. After that I announce these figures in church: what was our income, expenses, and how much of our debt we have retired. Other priests post these figures on the church doors; still others publish them and hand them out to their parishioners.

Those church finances! They have caused many uprisings in American parishes.⁴ In some places the priest has no control over

⁴ I have described some of these "uprisings" in my "Lay Initiative in American-Slovak Parishes, 1880-1930" in *Records of the American Catholic Historical*

the finances, he receives his pay, and that is it. But these are exceptions (among Slovaks they rarely arise), and very bad ones, and such priests are to be pitied. If the people see that their pastor is devoted, active, a good administrator, pays his debts (especially this, or he will be warned), is not arrogant (with some people you have to be very tactful), rude, cheap, demanding, snobbish and lazy, and does not shirk his duties on Sunday after Mass, then the people will support him. The Slovaks are very good in this regard. However, if one's predecessor ruined everything, then it is very difficult to regain the people's trust. From this you musn't conclude that the priest here is a servant of the people and has no authority. We all know that in Hungary, if the priest sides with the nobles, he will triumph, but what do the people think of him? I know that people value good priests more in America than they do in Hungary. We live in a land of 40 million Protestants and atheists but it is unheard of that someone would insult a Roman Catholic priest, as often happened in Hungary. We don't normally wear vestments in public, but we do wear Roman collars, and even without it people recognize us and address us as "Father." Here, as in the old country, people do complain to the bishops about us, and especially here where there are so many trains and streetcars, and most often about that miserable treasury, and mostly it is by the smartalecks and loudmouths who wish to control the parish. We do not have great formalities here, we address the bishop simply as "Bishop" (and usually he also serves as his own secretary) and, if he so wishes, he simply tells you that he is removing you from the parish. You are now on vacation

Society of Philadelphia, 83, 3-4 (September-December, 1972), 151-8; as has Raymond J. Kupke in "The Slovak National Catholic Church, Passaic, New Jersey, and the Jeczusko Affair," in *Slovakia*, 33, 60-61 (1987-88), 63-86.

and can travel wherever you want (provided you have the finances). However, since America is a "free country" you can appeal to the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, or even to Rome itself! Here you can do it.

The spiritual life. If we did not have those dissolute "boarders" among us, I could safely say that our people would be the best, the most moral and religious of all. Those who were raised in a religious way in the old country are good Catholics here as well. The work of priests in Slovakia is evident here. My Spiš Slovaks are the best of all those in Pittston—they attend services the most, they support the parish the most, and they obey and respect their pastor. Forty children attend the parochial school and if they lived closer, over 100 would attend. The people go to confession 2-3 times a year. We have a Rosary Society of the Sacred Heart and a Living Rosary Society; both have many members. Thirty of them subscribe to the religious magazine *Posol*. In the last year my parishioners raised almost \$4,000 for the support of their church. This is how we live in distant America, torn from our motherland, but very few of us wish to return. It must really be better here for the poor working person. Indeed, it is!

DOCUMENTATION:

Konštantín Čulen's
Long Journey
from Italy to Canada
As Illustrated by his Correspondence
with Juraj Rondoš¹

Susumu Nagayo

The emigration of post-World War II political émigrés from Europe to North America was a long and complicated process. Both the United States and Canada had passed legislation severely restricting immigration to their respective countries in the 1920's and 1930's and this legislation made it virtually impossible for post-war refugees to gain easy access into either country. To illustrate this difficulty I will focus upon one such refugee — the nationalist Slovak writer Konštantín Čulen.² This article is based

¹ I would like to thank the staff of the Archives and Special Collections of Morriset Library at the University of Ottawa for their kind support of my work. I also deeply thank Professor M. M. Stolárik for his critical comments and English corrections.

² On Konštantín Čulen's life see the following works and articles: František Vnuk, *Životopis Konštantína Čulena* [Biography of Konštantín Čulen], Cleveland, the Slovak Institute, 1984; *Slovenský biografický slovník (od roku 833 do roku 1990)* I [Slovak Biographical Dictionary (from 833 to 1990)], I, Martin, Matica slovenská, 1986, pp.433-434; "Kalendárium života a diela [Chronicle of his life and works]", In Štefan Baranovič (ed.), *Konštantín Čulen (1904 Brodské - 1964 New York). Zborník vydaný na počesť nedožitého deväťdesiatych naro-*

on the unpublished correspondence between Konštantín Čulen and Juraj Rondoš, which is in the Slovak Archives of Morisset Library at the University of Ottawa.³ We will reconstruct Čulen's case by extensively quoting from his correspondence, which was written in Slovak.

denín historika a novinára [Konštantín Čulen. Almanac Published in Honor of the Ninetieth Birthday of the Historian and Journalist], Martin, Matica slovenská, 1995, pp.66-68; Augustín Mat'ovčík and others, *Reprezentačný biografický lexikón Slovenska* [Representative Biographical Lexicon of Slovakia] Martin, Matica slovenská, 1999, pp.59-60. During his life Čulen wrote many books and articles. We still do not have his complete bibliography. Meanwhile see the following articles: Jozef Kirschbaum, "Bibliografia literárnych prác K. Čulena [Bibliography of Literary Works of K. Čulen]", *Slovák v Amerike*, July 29th, 1964; František Vnuk, Žvotopis Konštantína Čulena, pp.225-227; *Slovenský biografický slovník*, I, p. 434; Jozef Paučo, "Predstavitelia slovenskej kultúrnej tvorby [Representatives of Slovak Cultural Creation]. Konštantín Čulen", *Jednota*, September 19th, 1990; "Bibliografia literárnej tvorby [Bibliography of Literary Creation]", in Štefan Baranovič (ed.), Konštantín Čulen, pp.55-63. Among the above-mentioned bibliographies, the last has the most information.

³ The correspondence between Konštantín Čulen and Juraj Rondoš is located in the Slovak Archives of the Archives and Special Collections. It belongs to the Imrich Stolárik Fonds (ARCS 98-1), which consists of 38 boxes. The materials were donated to the University at the end of 1998 by the former President of the Canadian Slovak League, Imrich Stolárik (1909-2000). They consist mainly of the organizational papers of the League, but also contain personal materials of the founders of the League, such as Gabriel Kurdel, Andrej Kučera, and Juraj Rondoš. At present (November of 2001), the Imrich Stolárik Fonds is still being processed. A Preliminary Guide to the Imrich Stolárik Fonds is available in the reading room of the Archives. The correspondence of Juraj Rondoš is in four boxes (575-578). It consists of his official and personal documents and contains thousands of items. Among them are interesting materials relating to Rondoš's mediation on behalf of Slovak refugees seeking to enter Canada after World War II. The file of correspondence between Čulen and Rondoš is found in box 577. This file contains 165 letters (61 from Čulen to Rondoš, 42 from Rondoš to Čulen, and other letters) from 1947 to 1952.

* * *

By the end of March, 1945, as World War II in Europe was coming to an end, a group of people evacuated from Slovakia to escape capture by the Red Army and possible retribution in post-war Czechoslovakia. They were representatives of the independent Slovak State which was allied with Nazi Germany. These refugees briefly stayed in Holič and Skalica in Western Slovakia and, at the beginning of April, they entered Austrian territory. Finally, they settled in Kremsmünster, a small city to the south of Linz. Among them was Konštantín Čulen with his wife and daughter.

On May 8th, 1945, representatives of the Slovak government capitulated in Kremsmünster to the American Army. At the beginning they were treated politely. However, on May 19th the former Prime Minister Štefan Tiso and three other former Cabinet Ministers were arrested by the United States Counterintelligence Corps (CIC). On June 7th fifteen more people, including Čulen, were arrested as "Nazi collaborators". They were detained in American Army camps in Peuerbach (until September of 1945) and then in Glasenbach.

In March of 1946 Čulen was released from the camp due to the intervention of his wife. The family met again in Ried im Innkreis in Upper Austria. At the end of April, avoiding "war criminal" hunters of the Czechoslovak authorities, Čulen moved to Munich. But even here he did not feel secure, so at the end of August he returned to Austria. On September 20th, with the help of a friend in the CIC, he illegally crossed the border into Italy, hiding in the trunk of his friend's car. The next day he arrived in Rome, where he was reunited with his family.

In Rome, under the protection of Karol Sidor, the former Slovak Minister to the Vatican, Čulen started to work again as a

journalist. Utilizing newspapers and magazines from Slovakia as sources, he began to contribute articles to Slovak nationalist newspapers in the United States and Canada. At the same time, through connections with Slovak organizations abroad, Čulen began to seek entry into Canada.

The story begins with a letter dated June 6th, 1947, which Čulen sent to Juraj Rondoš⁴ in Winnipeg. Rondoš was one of the leading members of the nationalist fraternal organization, the Canadian Slovak League. At that time he was president of its

⁴ Juraj (George) Rondoš (1900-1985) was born in May 1900, the son of a farmer in the village of Vinné (Michalovce district, Zemplín County) in eastern Slovakia. In March 1926, he came to Canada looking for work. After engaging in various jobs, in October 1928, he opened in Winnipeg (Manitoba) a restaurant with a boarding house. In 1930 he became a member of the Winnipeg branch of the Slovenská liga v Amerike [the Slovak League of America]. In 1932 he established, together with his friends Andrej Kučera and Pavol Sabo, the fraternal organization Slovenská liga v Kanade [the Slovak League in Canada] which was renamed in 1934 the Kanadská slovenská liga [the Canadian Slovak League]. At the beginning of the 1930's he received his Canadian citizenship. In 1936-1938 he participated in the organization of colonization of Slovak agricultural immigrants to Rosewood (Manitoba). In 1938 he brought his wife and children to Canada. After World War II, as an official of the Canadian Slovak League, he helped many Slovak refugees (Displaced Persons) to emigrate to Canada. Čulen's case, which I reconstructed in this article, was one of them. After holding various important posts of the League, Rondoš died in Winnipeg in March of 1985 at the age of 84. For Rondoš's life see: Anonym (Konštantín Čulen), "Ujo Rondoš [Uncle Rondoš]", *Kalendár Kanadskej slovenskej ligy* [Almanac of the Canadian Slovak League], 1953, pp.209-212; Juraj Rondoš, "V lete šli spat' na breh rieky [In the Summer They Slept on the Riverbank]", In Imrich Stolárik, ed., *Spomienky pionierov* [Memories of Pioneers], Toronto, Canadian Slovak League, 1978, pp.207-220; Juraj Rondoš, "Moje rozpomienky na zašlé časy [My memories of long-ago days]", *Jubilejný kalendár Kanadskej slovenskej ligy* [Jubilee Almanac of the Canadian Slovak League], 1982, pp.51-55; Anton Hačko, "Posledné Zbohom Jurajovi Rondošovi [Last Farewell to Juraj Rondoš]", *Kalendár Kanadskej slovenskej ligy*, 1985-1986, pp.127-129.

Colonization Committee.⁵ In this letter Čulen informed Rondoš, with whom he had never met, of his desire to immigrate to Canada. Čulen introduced himself as follows:

As you know, in 1945, with many others I emigrated on my own initiative. After much pain and suffering, I settled here (in Rome). Since Czech and Bolshevik agents will not leave me alone and there is still the danger of being arrested, we would like to find us a place where we could begin a new life and work and live in safety.

I have many friends and relatives in America, but it is still hard to go there. They promise us much, but quotas are small, so perhaps we would have to wait for decades. To go to South America seems perhaps more easy, but, even so, it requires

⁵ In the Minutes of the 7th Convention of the Canadian Slovak League, which was held in October of 1946, we read the following passages: "News from the Colonization Committee — Brother Rondoš, the chairperson of the Colonization Committee, made an oral report and added that he has close contacts with members of the Colonization Office of the Canadian National Railways, who offered him the necessary information regarding immigration to Canada, especially with regard to Slovaks. Other ethnic groups also exert pressure on the Canadian government with respect to immigration of Displaced Persons, demanding revision of the Canadian Immigration Act. (...) Brother Rondoš, based on their explanation about the settlement of immigrants on Canadian farms, assured the delegates that the Canadian government would admit Slovaks to Canada if the provincial offices would give them permission. Brother Rondoš strongly appealed for sponsors for Slovak refugees and to help them to enter Canada. (...) At the end Brother Rondoš clarified who can immigrate to Canada and also referred to difficulties, such as temporary passports, the voyage across the Atlantic, and the lack of ships etc. At the same time he displayed some application forms which he received from the Colonization Office." *Zápisnica zo VII. kongresu Kanadskej slovenskej ligy vydržiavaného v dňoch 28-29-30 a 31. októbra 1946 vo Windsoru, Ontario* [Minutes of the 7th Convention of the Canadian Slovak League, held on October 28th — 31st, 1946, in Windsor, Ontario], pp.9-10.

time. So, I thought, what about Canada? I wrote a letter about this to Father Šprinc [Mikuláš Šprinc], who in turn sent a letter to president [of the Canadian Slovak League] Kučera ([Andrej Kučera]). And he told us to send to you the necessary information. I have a brother in America [Štefan Čulen in Chicago] who is also trying every possible means to get me nearer, so I want to try this as well.

I would like to ask you the following:

1. Can we enter [Canada]? There are three of us.
2. What do we need to do in order to enter?
3. How can you help us?

Čulen then provided his and his family's life histories.

I was born on February 26th, 1904, in the village Brodské, District of Skalica, Slovakia. My occupation is engineer (do not worry about it; it is so registered in my passport. It is exact, because I studied engineering in high school.). Since April of 1945 I am in exile. The reason why I do not want to go back and cannot do so is an antipathy towards the domestic Bolshevik rule. I have a Red Cross passport issued in Rome.

Alžbeta Čulen, born on December 19th, 1906, in Bratislava, is my wife. She has a Red Cross passport too.

Elena Eva Čulen, born in January 22nd, 1929, in Bratislava, a student, is my daughter. She too has a Red Cross passport. We are all stateless.

As we can guess from Čulen's defensive tone, this life history is not entirely accurate. Čulen was no engineer. According to his biography, Čulen was a middle-aged Slovak nationalist journalist.

Although he did not have a university education, he had been a brilliant journalist even as a youth. At the time of political crisis in Czechoslovakia in 1938-39, Čulen participated in the activities of the Hlinka Slovak People's Party for Slovak autonomy. After March of 1939, when the independent Slovak State was declared, he became its strong supporter. He was a Member of Parliament (December, 1938 - March, 1939, the Slovak Autonomy Parliament, then March, 1939 - spring of 1945, the Parliament of the independent Slovak State) and he served as a cultural attaché at the Czecho-Slovak Legation in Washington (January - March, 1939). Although he was prevented from participating in political activities by his political rivals from the summer of 1940 on, he continued to be active in the field of culture and journalism until the end of the war.

In his letter to Rondoš, Čulen explained the reason for his emigration as "an antipathy towards the domestic Bolshevik rule". He told only half of the story. In June of 1947, when the letter was written, the Communist Party already held the leading position and had great influence in Czechoslovakia, but political pluralism still existed. The Communists did not seize power until February of 1948. More likely, Čulen was afraid of "war criminal" hunters and the so-called "people's courts" of the Czechoslovak authorities.⁶

⁶ "Being condemned a 'war criminal' by London [the Czechoslovak government in exile], Moscow [the Czechoslovak Communist group in exile], and Banská Bystrica [the headquarters of the Slovak National Uprising in 1944], he [Čulen] had to go into exile to escape the gallows." František Vnuk, *Životopis Konštantína Čulena*, p.102. — "To my question why he [Čulen] fled abroad at the end of war, he answered that he had been afraid of Beneš's revenge." Imrich Kružliak, "Spomienky na Konštantína Čulena [Memories of Konštantín Čulen]", in Štefan Baranovič (ed.), *Konštantín Čulen*, p.48. — "When the front [of the Red Army] approached, Čulen, who opposed, as a Member of the Parliament

Čulen shifted the whole responsibility of his emigration onto the "Bolsheviks", because he knew that the independent Slovak State, which he had strongly supported during World War II, had been allied with Nazi Germany and Canada had fought the war on the side of the Allies. He was also counting on the emerging Cold War, which was shaping Canada's relations with Western countries. However, as we may guess from the tone of his reply, Rondoš already understood Čulen's delicate situation. It was common knowledge, not only in Slovakia, but also in the Slovak immigrant communities in North America, that Čulen had a "splendid past record" as a Slovak nationalist.

Without hesitation, Rondoš answered Čulen's request with a skillful and kind reply dated June 23rd.

I understood well your letter, and your wish to enter Canada with your family. You asked me to answer the three following questions:

1. Whether can you enter Canada with your family? You can enter Canada as a farm worker. I have close friends who occupy high positions in the Canadian Immigration Office. I had a long conversation with them. I explained briefly your situation. I simply told them as a friend that you are highly educated and the reason why you were expelled abroad. I also told them what are you thinking of doing if you enter Canada. They assured me that, after arriving in Canada, you will be free here, according to your ability. But if you want to

and representative politician of the first Slovak Republic, Bolshevism and especially Beneš's Czechoslovak politics, which did not even recognize the existence of the Slovak nation, had to evacuate from Slovakia by government decree." Dušan M. Janota, "Spomienka [Memories]", in Štefan Baranovič (ed.), *Ibid.* p.52.

enter Canada as soon as possible, you have to be registered together with your family as farm workers. Please forget other worries. Canada needs people like you. Here everybody is free and everybody is responsible for their own future.

2. What do you need to do for that? You have to do nothing. I will find for you a good Slovak farmer who will submit an application to the Canadian Immigration Office. He will petition to admit you and your family to Canada and declare that he has work and lodging on his farm for all of you.

3. What could I do for you? I could do what I explained to you in 1. and 2. I will begin the work with your permission and by Divine protection. And I hope that our work will be successful according to the information which I provided for you and your family. A responsible person (at the Immigration Office) told me that it will take you three to six months at most to enter Canada.

It was a smooth beginning. Čulen was very pleased with the reply. As promised, Rondoš quickly found a sponsor for the Čulen family and so informed him of it in a letter dated July 9th:

Your fellow-countryman from Trnava named Jozef Volek submitted an application that he needs you and your family for work on the farm. He also submitted an application to the Canadian Immigration Office, a copy of which I am enclosing with this letter. Please do not worry. Either a Canadian Immigration Officer there will personally visit you or they will inform you by letter as to where you should present yourself.

In the correspondence between Čulen and Rondoš we found drafts of an application entitled "This form has been prepared by

the Immigration Branch, Department of Mines and Resources, for the use of persons applying for the admission to Canada of immigrants". There are two copies of the same form, for Konštantín Čulen and his wife Alžbeta Čulen, and for their daughter Elena Eva Čulen. Both copies indicate at the end: "Dated at Rosewood Man. (Manitoba) this 4 day of July A.D.1947. Signed Jozef Volek"⁷

In this application there are some misleading statements. In the space for "relationship to applicant" they filled out as "friend" (needless to say, neither Čulen nor his wife had ever met Volek) and in the space for "citizenship" as "Č.S.R. [the Czechoslovak Republic]" (in his first letter to Rondoš Čulen wrote that they were "stateless"). To the question "occupation in own county" they filled out as "farmer" (not "engineer" as Čulen had written before) and to the question "intended occupation in Canada", they answered: "to work on a farm".

The most serious falsehood was the answer to the question "Has Immigrant ever lived in Canada or the United States? If so, between what dates and what address?" They simply answered "No", which was not true. Čulen had actually lived in the United States three times. The first time (1905-1909) it was as a child with his parents, who were migrant workers; the second time

⁷ Jozef Volek (1903-?) was one of the Slovak farmers who lived in Rosewood (Manitoba). He was born in 1903 in Trnava (Western Slovakia), came to Canada in 1927 and later obtained his Canadian citizenship. He acted as the financial secretary of the Branch 19 (Rosewood) of the Canadian Slovak League (the head of the Branch was Juraj Rondoš). Volek wrote in the application, which was sent to the Immigration Office of the Ministry of Mines and Resources in July of 1947: "I have clear title to 560 acres (...) Financial resurses (sic) \$ 25.000.00. Anaal (sic) income about \$ 7.000.00." Čulen wrote in his letter of August 1st, 1947, to Rondoš that Volek was a friend of the famous Slovak historian in exile, František Hrušovský.

(December, 1935 - July, 1936) as one of members of the delegation sent by Matica slovenská (Slovak national cultural organization) to visit fellow-countrymen in the United State; the third time (January - December, 1939), as indicated above, as a cultural attaché at the Czecho-Slovak Legation in Washington and then, after March, as an editor of the official organ of the Slovak League in America, *Slovenská obrana* [The Slovak Defence]. Certainly the purpose of the last two stays was not as a farmer. His third stay in 1939 was especially significant and controversial. At that time Čulen openly supported Slovak autonomy and, ultimately, independence.

Even though Volek filled in the application, he probably only took dictation from Rondoš. Rondoš must have known about Čulen's career in the United States. However, as reported in his letter dated June 23rd, he already had prior consultations with high-ranking officials in the Immigration Office in Winnipeg, so he probably considered this application as just a formality.

Furthermore, Volek filled out after the sentence that "I have made the following arrangements for a home and employment for the above named immigrants," as "We will recive (sic) them on aur (sic) Farm and guarantee full maintenance and farm Employment at going Wages." To the question "Is transportation to be prepaid?" he answered that "I will pay transportation," even though Volek must have known from the beginning that the Čulen family had no intention of working on a farm.

On July 15th Čulen received Rondoš's letter dated July 9th. Enclosed were copies of the application which Volek had submitted to the Immigration Office. In his reply dated August 1st, Čulen complained as follows:

Well, now I would only ask you to take up this matter with the proper authorities, because there are several Slovaks here who have papers like this and have been waiting for a long time, but nothing is happening. The worst thing is that they write much about our difficulties and thousands of people live by talking about the necessity of doing something to solve the refugee problem, and make as if they have done and deliberated. Meanwhile, emigrants are perishing physically and morally, while the gentlemen are having a good time. America in particular pays much attention to the matter, but not even one refugee is admitted. The bill, which should have been passed, was pigeonholed. Congress went into recess for a vacation. It will be reconvened again only in January (of next year) and undoubtedly the bill will not be touched until the summer of 1948. If it is passed, migration can be started in 1949 or 1950. However, who can bear it? [In reality the DP (Displaced Persons) Act was passed in Congress in the spring of 1948 and the migration started in October of that year.] Why don't they speak less, write less and act more? Of course, what can we, small and simple people, do against the roguery of gentlemen's politics?

In reply to Čulen's complaint (the letter was not dated, but according to its contents it was perhaps written in the middle of August), Rondoš reported as follows:

You asked me to expedite the matter. Well, I will tell you what is happening. Mr. Volek was summoned to the Immigration Office where he was asked [to provide evidence regarding the following]: 1. Evidence from the district office that he [Volek] is really the owner of 520 acres of land [according

to the application which Volek submitted to the Immigration office, it was 560 acres of land]. He proved it by showing a private letter from the district office and also documents which proved that he has no debt. 2. Evidence from a bank regarding his savings. We could prove that easily enough. But after that they asked the third question. We were asked to explain how Mr. Volek came to know you. We answered that he went to school together with you and he remembers you as a farmer's son who was also trained in blacksmithing. Thus, when Mr. Volek left for Canada twenty years ago, you [Čulen] remained at home working as a village blacksmith and also as the cultivator of a small estate. We were asked why you lived in exile. Did you run away as a civilian or as a soldier? To this we answered that you were not a soldier and that you ran away as a civilian from communist terror.

In his reply, dated August 28th, Čulen humorously promised to "tell the same story":

Thank you for the information about the examination by the Canadian office. Well, arriving there, I will present myself as the blacksmith. It is not such a big lie, because my father was a blacksmith, and, from childhood I was in his shop. If necessary, I pumped the bellows and helped with the big hammer, so this is not a craft which I could not acknowledge. I could, perhaps, pass the examination.

By the end of September the Canadian bureaucracy finally replied. Čulen's sponsor, Jozef Volek, received the following positive notice dated September 29th from R.N. Munroe, the

District Superintendent of the Immigration Branch of the Department of Mines and Resources in Winnipeg:

In connection with your application fro [sic-for] the admission to Canada of your friends, Konstantin Culen, his wife, Alzbeta and their daughter, Elena Eva, of c/o Karel (sic-Karol) Sidor, Citta del Vaticano, Italy, this is to advise that the settlement arrangements have been found satisfactory, and the necessary steps are being taken to have the proposed immigrants examined overseas. It will, of course, take some little time to complete these arrangements.

A copy of this notice was immediately sent by Rondoš to Čulen who wrote about the news in his reply dated October 20th.

These were the most delightful letters which I received during almost three years of exile. And especially, as I see, it is serious and we can judge according to the letter which you received [the above-mentioned letter by Munroe] that in fact the matter has already been arranged. Now it is only a question of time, according to the letter.

Čulen concluded optimistically:

I am ending this letter with thanks for all which you have done for now. I caused you much concern, but I really had nobody else to ask. After all kinds of promises and assurances which I received, what you have done is most real and most clear. Well, once again sincere thanks and if that "some little time" in office is prolonged (I do not know how the bureaucrats function in Canada, but in Slovakia they say that a short

time lasts one year), please expedite it again. In any case, I hope that by Christmas I will be with you.

While awaiting a reply from the Canadian bureaucrats, Rondoš reported to Čulen in a letter dated November 3rd that he had already arranged for Čulen's tickets: "I am informing you that today I purchased for you and your family the steamship tickets. It means the following: You have your fare paid from Southampton, England, to New York by ship and from New York to Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, by train." As we shall see later, Rondoš paid the fare out of his own pocket.

However, on November 18th, Rondoš received a notice dated November 17th from the Cunard White Star Line, where he had booked the tickets. In the notice a certain Patterson, the person in charge, wrote:

You will recall our conversation, in which I advised you that we are not permitted to sell Prepaid for non-Canadians resident in Italy, for the reason that the Canadian Government has not an Examining Office for immigrants in that country.

Our Head Office [in England] is most [sic-most] anxious to assist us, but point out very plainly that they cannot take the responsibility of bringing the family forward to Paris for examination by the Canadian Civil and Medical Authorities, on the chance that they might be turned down. Therefore, I give you the suggestion, for what it is worth, that if these people can legitimately leave Italy and establish themselves in Paris, and you will confirm to us the Paris address at which they are resident, we could then make representations to have the Permit transferred to Paris and the examination take place there.

Rondoš at once wrote a letter (dated November 18th) to Čulen.

I have very close contacts with the company regarding your matter. Just now I received a letter from them in which they say that they cannot start with your matter and that you have to go to Paris with your family by yourself and that in Italy they cannot arrange a medical examination.

In order not to explain much, I enclose you with this letter a copy of the notice. I hope you will choose a trip to Paris. And please present yourself at their company. [...] And show them the copy of the notice which I am sending you and either they or you announce yourself as soon as probable to the main office in England where they already have all the best information about you and the registered ship tickets are waiting for you.

The same day Rondoš sent a letter to Štefan Čulen^{*}, Konštantín's younger brother, who lived in Chicago: "[...] I dared to pay for the steamship tickets of your brother and his family from England to New York and I also paid for train tickets from New York to Winnipeg out of my own pocket \$636.42 [...] I did not want to tell this even to my friends, in order not to confuse somebody about my work."

Rondoš also enclosed as evidence the copy of the notice from the ship company of November 17th and continued: "From your letter I understood that you are willing to pay your brother's fare, in order to get him here as soon as possible. I dared to pay it out of my own pocket. I hope that I am cooperating with good peo-

^{*} Štefan Čulen (1909-?), third of five brothers of Konštantín Čulen, was born in Pennsylvania (USA), and worked in Chicago as a manual laborer.

ple and that my money will not be wasted." Rondoš here suggested that, since he paid Čulen's travelling expenses, Štefan Čulen should reimburse him.

Referring to "your letter, Rondoš had in mind Štefan Čulen's letter (stamped October 15th) in which Štefan wrote from Chicago that, "As soon as they [his brother's family] get visas, I would like immediately to send them plane tickets. If I could somehow help, please write me." Štefan Čulen, after receiving Rondoš's letter of November 18th, answered on November 21st, and informed him of his intention to reimburse Rondoš, as requested.⁹

Meanwhile, around November 22nd, Konštantín Čulen visited the Canadian Legation to Italy in Rome accompanied by an Italian friend, General Armando Mola. The Legation was newly-established and the Minister to Italy, Jean Désy¹⁰ had just been appointed on October 13th of that year. In a letter dated November 24th, Čulen reported to Rondoš the result of his visit:

A while ago I returned from the Canadian Embassy. I went there with our friend, the general, who knows the Ambassador well. They received us warmly. We explained to them how our matter is going. We gave them an English tran-

⁹ Because of the complication in getting Čulen's entrance visa to Canada, Rondoš cancelled in June 1948, the reserved tickets. See the notice of the Cunard Donaldson Limited Company of June 17th, 1948.

¹⁰ Jean Désy (1893-1960), Canadian diplomat, was born in Montreal (Quebec) to a French Canadian family. In 1925 he entered the Department of External Affairs in Ottawa. He was one of the earliest Francophone diplomats in Canada. In 1941-1947 he was the Minister to Brazil (in 1943 promoted to Ambassador). On October 13th, 1947, he was appointed Minister to Italy and on June 26th, 1948, was promoted to Ambassador and served in this position until 1952. In 1954-1958 he was the Ambassador to France and he died in Paris in 1960.

slation of your last letter (of November 3rd) in which you wrote that travel expenses had been paid. We also gave them the letter (notice, dated September 29th) which the Immigration Office had sent to you. The Ambassador said that everything was O.K. He said that we do not even need to go to Paris and that he will arrange the matter himself, including a medical examination and visa. The only things you will need are the following:

1. Confirmation from the (ship) company that travel expenses have been paid.

2. Confirmation from Ottawa (the Canadian government) that entry to Canada is permitted.

We asked him (the Ambassador) to request the matter telegraphically on condition that we will pay the expense connected with it. He promised to arrange it in this way. We had already asked the agency of the Cunard Company here to obtain confirmation concerning the payment of travel expenses. It would be good, if you could call their attention to this matter as soon as possible. Because he [the Ambassador] said that, if he will have it [the Confirmation] in his hand, he may issue the visa, so we could depart about the middle of December. Well, we would truly like to do so. We would fly away from here to London and then we would await there the next ship and we would depart. Really, we are growing impatient, like children before Christmas, and already we would like to be on the road. We will rest only when our ship moves in your direction.

Čulen's optimism grew after he received two letters from Rondoš (dated November 18th and November 20th) and a copy of the notice from the ship company (dated November 17th).

Čulen wrote in his letter dated November 27th as follows: "If the matter moves faster, we will be there (in Canada) even in December, if slower, we will be there in January. Anyway, our hope was never so clear, as it is now. We feel as if we have everything within reach."

However, "Confirmation from Ottawa that entry to Canada is permitted," which they had asked the Legation to obtain did not come. As Čulen reminded Rondoš in his letter of December 3rd, "The Legation here is waiting for information from Ottawa that they may issue us visas. I think that he [the Ambassador] already requested it telegraphically. If you have an opportunity, please ask them to send it here as soon as possible. Because, as long as we do not have a Canadian visa, we cannot take the next step."

Feeling uneasy about the delay, Čulen sent to Rondoš the letter of General Mola written in English (dated December 13th). On behalf of Čulen General Mola explained his situation as follows:

I saw again this morning, Mr. [T.L.] CARTER, [Second] Secretary at the Canadian Legation, acting for the Ambassador Mr.[Jean] DESY, so as to facilitate matters in every possible way.

1) Everything is all right as regards prepaid tickets, since the Legation is satisfied with the written declaration given CULEN by the CUNARD Office (Mr. BROOKS).

2) Mr. CARTER took note of what you wrote about the permit to enter Canada having already been sent to Rome. Nothing, however, reached the Canadian Legation yet, though the latter wrote Ottawa about it Nov. 22nd already.

3) By same letter, the authorisation was asked of the Canadian Government for the Legation actually applying the

visas on the three passports, even though the immigration Officials, to whom such a task is usually entrusted, are still to arrive. In the opinion of the Legation, such an exception might be granted since all documents were checked and found all right, and since the Legation have already their own Doctor who'll be able to submit the CULENS to the required medical examination. Were the authorisation not granted, Mr. CARTER says there seems to be no hope for the proper office to be ready for work here before two months or so!

It would seem therefore most advisable that you should kindly complete the extraordinary work you and Mr. VOLEK have already done in favour of our friends by personally going to the proper Department in OTTAWA and - making precise reference to the Legation's letter of Nov. 22nd - insisting that it should be answered favourably, possibly by cable: mind, not for the permit only, but also for the power to be granted the Legation. This is also Mr. CARTER's advice.

On December 14th, Čulen sent Rondoš a cable. Unfortunately, I could not find it in the files of the correspondence, but, according to the contents of the aforementioned letter, we may guess that Čulen's cable asked Rondoš to obtain the confirmation from Ottawa by cable and to give to the Legation the power to issue visas. Having received it on December 15th, Rondoš visited the agency of the Cunard Company and the Immigration Office in Winnipeg without getting a favourable response.

In those circumstances he decided to seek the intervention to his close friend, Senator John Thomas Haig¹¹, and visited his law

¹¹ John Thomas Haig (1877-1962), Influential politician in Winnipeg (Manitoba). He was born to a Scottish family in Ontario and was a lawyer by profession. In 1914 he was elected to several tenures in the Manitoba Legislature In

office in the city. Unfortunately Haig was attending Parliament in Ottawa. His brother, who had received Rondoš, reported to Haig in a letter dated December 15th (to which was enclosed a notice from Munroe, dated September 29th and a copy of Čulen's cable dated December 14th):

Your old friend, Mr. Rondoš was in the office today. He has applied under the Immigration Act, to bring out his friend, Konstantin Culen, his wife and daughter who are presently in Italy. [...]

The difficulty seems to be that we have no immigration authority in Rome. There is nothing there but a Legation and without special authority, they apparently have not the power to grant immigration permits. You will note the wire asking that the permit be cabled and that authority be given to the legation to Grant a visa.

[...] The only difficulty seems to be the permit and the visa. We know that you will do everything in your power to have this rushed to completion before you return from Ottawa. Mr. Rondoš is exceedingly anxious, he has gone to a lot of trouble and spent a lot of money, and would certainly appreciate anything you could do to iron out the difficulties.

1935 he was appointed to the Senate, Dominion of Canada, in Ottawa. From 1945 on he was the leader of the opposition party (the Progressive Conservative Party) in the Senate. In June 1957, through the victory of his party in the general election, he became the leader of the government party. In October of that year he was appointed Minister without portfolio in the Diefenbaker Government. In May of 1958 he resigned this position.

Receiving the news from Winnipeg, Senator Haig met with his personal friend, Hugh Llewellyn Keenleyside¹² who was the Deputy Minister of the Department of Mines and Resources and in charge of Immigration. After being “probed”, Haig answered Rondoš in a letter dated December 22nd as follows:

[...] You also know that I am leader of the Opposition [the Progressive Conservative Party] in the Senate of Canada and I took the time off to go and see the Deputy Minister of Mines and Natural Resources who is also the Deputy Minister of Immigration. He assured me that in two weeks from the 14th of December, that they would either have one of their own officers in Rome to give Visas for Canada or authority would be given to the Canadian Legation to issue them.

The Deputy is a personal friend of mine and I am sure he will do exactly that thing. I sent the Immigration letter, about the duties to the Deputy Minister and he said it would all be cleared up in two weeks so that your friend [Čulen] will be able to get his Visas not later than January first.

¹² Hugh Llewellyn Keenleyside (1898-1992), Canadian scholar, diplomat, and high-ranking civil servant, was born in Toronto. In 1928 he entered the Department of External Affairs in Ottawa. In 1929-1936 he served in Tokyo as First Secretary of the Canadian Legation in Japan. During World War II he was opposed to the forced evacuation of Japanese Canadians. In 1944-1947 he became Minister to Mexico, and in 1947-1950 the Deputy Minister of the Department of Mines and Resources. In this period he published the article *Canadian Immigration Policy*, Vancouver, the University of British Columbia, 1948. Later he held various important positions in the United Nations and in British Columbia. He published *Memoirs of Hugh L. Keenleyside*, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1981-82, in two volumes.

On the same day Rondoš, enclosing a copy of Haig's letter, answered General Mola in English:

I was indeed pleased to receive your letter of December 13th with the detailed information therein. I also received the cable of Mr. Culen, and immediately took the necessary action with the Immigration officials in Ottawa.

To assure you that immediate action will be taken by the Canadian Immigration authorities, I am enclosing herewith a copy of a letter written by Mr. John T. Haig, Leader of the Opposition in the Canadian Senate, which is self-explanatory.

Many of Mr. Culen's Slovak friends in Canada are looking forward to his arrival.

Čulen described to Rondoš, on December 31st how he felt when he received the letter:

We were feeling very blue at the end of the year. It seemed that everything had gone wrong. And here, in the last hours of the passing year, your latest news, which you sent to General Mola, arrived. It delighted us very much and it gave us new hope. Yesterday General Mola told me: "I am 73 years old, I travelled around the world, I saw and experienced much, but I have never yet in my life met with such a case of a countryman's friendship, as I see here with Mr. Rondoš. You can be proud of it not only as a human being, but especially as a Slovak."

Meanwhile, on the same day General Mola went to petition the Canadian Legation with a copy of Senator Haig's letter of

December 22nd which Rondoš had sent him. Čulen reported to Rondoš about this episode at the end of his December 31st letter:

Just a while ago the General returned from the Legation. They read the letter [from Haig] and they said that it is interesting, but according to the existing laws they may issue a visa only to Italian citizens, but not to foreigners. Until now they received nothing about our matter. They promised that they will send a cable and request an answer from Ottawa to the previous letter [dated November 22nd] about our matter. They have certain objections to our Red Cross passports and they say that we have to get others. In a word, there will be still many difficulties. By the way, the General is writing to you about this matter. They will have to get a special order to issue a visa to Čulen and his family. While there is no order, nothing can be done.

We also found in the file General Mola's letter to Rondoš written in English (dated December 31st):

Many thanks for your kind letter of Dec. 22nd and appended enclosure from Sen. JOHN T. HAIG.

I immediately went to the Canadian Legation and showed them both letters to Mr. CARTER [Second Secretary]. He was evidently impressed; but unfortunately he said that - though they already had authority to give visas without awaiting for the arrival of the Emigration Officials in Rome - this is for the time being applicable to Italians only. The Legation has as yet not received any similar instructions, neither for your specific case, nor for emigrants other than Italians.

I saw H.E. DESY also, and he assured me they would do their showing their best good-will, since they promised me they would cable to-day to insist that OTTAWA should answer by cable to the letter the Legation originally wrote to the Department last November.

Knowing unfortunately how slow bureaucracy [sic] is in all countries, may I suggest that - with this piece of news in hand - you should ask your powerful friends to specifically insist that a cable was immediately sent, as suggested by the Legation.

General Mola wrote in detail about the passport problem which Čulen mentioned only briefly:

Another complication arose at the last moment: namely that the RED CROSS passports - which had been by the Legation declared valid - are now not considered fit, by some recent new regulations!!! It would be necessary to have them substituted by some C.S.I.R.O documents - which it would take an enormous time to obtain - even though the Legation promised their support to hasten matters. Couldn't it also be obtained from OTTAWA that they should cable and authorise the Legation to exceptionally accept the RED CROSS passports as valid for the CULENs case only?

According to their expectation at the beginning, it would "take you [Čulen's family] three to six months at most to enter Canada" (Rondoš's letter of June 23rd, 1947). However, the barrier of the Canadian bureaucracy was greater than they imagined and 1947 drew to a close over the anxiety of obtaining a visa.

In the second half of January 1948, Čulen's attempts to enter Canada looked hopeful. He reported in his letter to Rondoš, dated January 16th as follows:

Just a while ago they phoned me from the [Canadian] Legation, that they already received the documents and perhaps within a week they will arrange the matter. They already fixed for us even the date of the medical examination. I hope it will end well, because we all feel ourselves quite healthy. [...] If it will go well, we could perhaps get a visa by about [January] 23rd. Then it will take some time, while we receive an English and possibly an American [transit visa]. So we reckon that at the end of February we could arrive in Canada or in the United States.

At that moment Čulen thought that an entry visa to Canada was within reach. To his great disappointment, however, he failed his medical examination.

Twenty-two years earlier Čulen had suffered from a serious disease. At the end of August in 1926, when the twenty-one-year-old had worked in the editorial office of the daily *Slovák* in Bratislava, he was hospitalized for pleurisy. For two weeks he hovered between life and death. His temperature sometimes rose as high as 41 degrees. After three months of fighting the disease, he was allowed to leave the hospital. After convalescing for months at a sanatorium in the High Tatras, at the end of the year Čulen returned to his regular life in Bratislava.¹³

On January 28th, 1948, the Čulen family reported to the newly established Canadian Immigration Office in Rome for a medical examination. Čulen reported the results to Rondoš in a letter dated the same day:

It seemed that everything would be all right, when they suddenly looked at the X-ray of my bowels. Twenty-two

¹³ František Vnuk, *Životopis Konštantína Čulena*, p.45.

years ago I suffered from pleurisy. They said that even today one can see on the photograph traces of the inflammation. Since then I never got sick, but a Canadian doctor questioned it and postponed the issuance of our visas for later, only after the agreement of the Department of National Health and Welfare [for Canada] in London. They will send all the documents there. If they will agree, we can get visas, but if not, we can do nothing. We are for ever kept waiting.

Čulen continued in a pessimistic tone:

Well, we truly did not expect it. Everything seemed all right. We received passports from the I.R.O. With the documents we had no problem, nor with the civil investigation. It never occurred to me that today they would call into question my illness of 22 years ago and that it would halt everything. My wife and daughter were recognised as healthy. This is sad and unexpected news for you and for us. So much work, so much running around and expenses, and finally this. You can hardly imagine what kind of medical examination we had. First of all the X-ray, then the medical and physical examination, then blood tests and then once more the face of a Canadian doctor. They were more strict than at the medical check-ups for conscription. Now we have to wait for what they will decide in London. After so many experiences there is in our mind only a small spark of hope, since for emigrants things usually do not go well. What more can we do? We are truly bewildered and unhappy. We descended from hope into the abyss of hopelessness.

After he received Čulen's "sad and unexpected news", Rondoš answered (in his letter of February 3rd) to keep his hopes up:

... believe me, I and my whole family grieved when we read your letter. But, considering the whole matter, I think it will change for the better, because many people have such traces as you mentioned. The blood test will prove (that you are healthy) and in London they will reconsider the matter. I still believe in Almighty God and everything will be fine. Please wait a couple of days, to see how they will answer you. And then, let me know instantly what kind of answer you get. If you do not feel weak, I think it will pass and soon you can move in the direction of Canada.

It was said that "within three weeks they will certainly answer from London" (Čulen's letter to Rondoš of March 3rd), "at the latest within three weeks we will receive the answer" (his letter of March 20th), but the reply from the Department of National Health and Welfare for Canada in London was again delayed. Growing nervous, Čulen complained to Rondoš on March 29th as follows:

The Canadian gentlemen unpleasantly trifled with us and in an un-Christian manner. The most unpleasant part is that they said neither "yes" nor "no". Government officials, having a good life, tease poor emigrants. If one were not thoroughly affected by anti-Bolshevism, well, after such an experience one would like to give up, to leave for the other side and to say to them; "Forgive me, we wronged you." However, the sorrowful truth is that the so-called democrats who chatter a lot about humanism and democracy practice such un-

Christian and such brutal things that on this point there are few differences between them and the Bolsheviks. [...]

Well, what shall we do? We all are against the heartlessness of the authorities and the stupidity of the bureaucracy and feel very helpless. You have done more than one could expect from a close family member. I am sorry that it turned out so badly.

In Čulen's letters we noticed several parts where he expressed dissatisfaction towards the immigration policy of Canada and the United States, and criticism and antipathy against the Western countries. Even the nationalist Čulen, who professed to be a hard-line anti-Bolshevik, reflected the emotional anti-Western sentiment of the contemporary left-wing intellectuals. Conversely, we found here and there sentences in which Čulen praised the attitude of the Argentine and Spanish governments which gladly accepted immigrants.

At the beginning of April Čulen at last received a reply from London. The result was negative. In a letter to Rondoáš of April 1st, Čulen exploded in anger:

Well, finally the obvious happened. Today we went to the Canadian ([Immigration] Office. They welcomed us very nicely, saying: "I just wanted to write you, you came just at the right time!" After such an introduction we were curious about the good news. They did not keep us waiting. They said: "You can not receive a visa for Canada. We received such an answer from our superiors."

It did not surprise us. Because, after the long comedy which they subjected us to, we shouldn't have expected anything else. Your work was in vain. Our efforts were in

vain. Even the intervention of Abbot Kojiš of Cleveland was in vain and useless. It helped nothing. Canada needs men with strong fists such as Joe Louis, but it does not need men who dared once in their life to become sick. I am sorry about your efforts and work. Although on the other hand, I had a beautiful experience. And I see clearly the true character of the humanity and Christianity of the United States, Britain, and Canada in the international conferences against Bolshevism. They pretend as if only they are apostles of mercy. One is disgusted with it, when one hears these hypocritical speeches and sees these brutal behaviours. Believe me, they are as bad as the Communists.

Čulen also vented his anger on Senator Haig, who acted as an intermediary:

I thought that such a Senator, as leader of the opposition, has yet some power and the right to speak. But it seems to me that he has not much. I was once an unimportant deputy, but when I petitioned to the Minister of the Interior [Alexander Mach] that there were several Polish refugees who were hunted by the Gestapo, and if they were arrested, they would be shot, it was sufficient for the Minister immediately to issue them Slovak passports and as Slovak citizens to place them in the state service. Our Minister did not send them to an X-ray examination in order to have a look at their lungs, whether they had not by chance some medical history. If you want, you may tell Mr. Senator that it is strange that such an important politician can do nothing even for such a trifle. We have to clench our teeth and regret the lost time. After such experiences, one has to consider what to do next. There are not

many choices. One might even consider returning to the home country and to confess to the Bolsheviks as follows: "Forgive me, I was disappointed. In the West there is no democracy, no humanity, no Christianity, there are only forests for which they need cheap and absolutely healthy workers. No more, no less. Nothing had changed since the Americans carried slaves from Africa. The only difference is perhaps that now they check them even by X-ray, which they did not have one hundred years ago."

In the morning of April 2nd, Čulen received the notice with the same contents from the Canadian Immigration Office. Reporting to Rondoš shortly thereafter, he wrote in a pessimistic tone that "otherwise I doubt that it is possible to change the matter" (letter dated April 2nd). To do justice to the Canadian authorities, it should be pointed out that they did not make a wrong diagnosis. In reality, in August of that year, Čulen spat blood and was hospitalized. A spot was found in his right lung, but thanks to streptomycin and a calcium injection he was discharged from the hospital on September 10th.¹⁴

In February of 1948, when Čulen was disappointed by the medical examination and its aftermath, the Communist Party finally seized power in Czechoslovakia. When Čulen suggested, perhaps only rhetorically, the possibility of returning to Czechoslovakia and of surrendering to the "Bolsheviks," in Czechoslovakia they were preparing a political trial against him.

However, before Čulen's trial started, the Communists organized another political trial against a group of people, including

¹⁴ *Ibid.* pp.145-146.

his youngest brother Ladislav Čulen¹⁵, who remained in Slovakia. Ladislav was arrested in September of 1947, under suspicion of participating in the underground activities of the Slovak Action Committee [Slovenský akčný výbor] led by a nationalist politician in exile, Ferdinand Ďurčanský. Štefan Čulen, Konštantín's younger brother, wrote in a letter to Rondoš (stamped October 15th, 1947):

I [Štefan Čulen] received a letter from Slovakia. They arrested our brother [Ladislav Čulen] who was a professor in Bratislava. We do not expect that he will come back alive, for many people were arrested and accused of wanting to assassinate Beneš [then the Czechoslovak President]. It is nothing but pretence to murder them. Very many people are arrested. These poor guys will never return.

Suspicions of plotting to assassinate President Edvard Beneš were spread by the State Security Police (ŠTB). However, it was true that these people, including Ladislav Čulen, organized the underground, supporting the idea of an independent Slovak state, and supplied information to Dr. Ďuranský, one of the leaders of the Slovak independence movement, who was in exile in Italy (after July of 1947 in Argentina).¹⁶

¹⁵ Ladislav Čulen (1916-1990), fifth of five brothers of Konštantín Čulen, studied history at Comenius University in Bratislava. During the independent Slovak State he served at the Slovak Embassy in Budapest. As mentioned above, he was arrested in September 1947, under suspicion of participating in an anti-state conspiracy and was sentenced in April 1948, to 18 years in prison. He was released in 1962.

¹⁶ "The organizational network of the Slovak Action Committee in Slovakia was initiated at the suggestion of J. Fickuliak in May of 1947. The group organized around Jozef Dobrovodský and participated in this initiative through L.

Otto Obuch, the central figure of the so-called "anti-state conspiracy", was a press officer who worked in the office of then deputy-Prime Minister of the Czechoslovak government, Ján Ursíny. Ursíny was one of the leaders of the Democratic Party, the largest political party in Slovakia at that time. Obuch was arrested in late September of 1947. By the end of October State Security, taking advantage of the affair, forced the deputy-P.M. Ursíny out of office. Slovakia fell into a political crisis (the so-called November crisis) and as a result, the Communist Party succeeded in weakening its rival, the Democratic Party, and strengthened its position in Slovak politics.¹⁷

Čulen. Members of this illegal organization, officially named "the Slovak Action Committee — headquarters in Bratislava", spread its activity to all of Slovakia, which was divided into three regions." Róbert Letz, *Slovensko v rokoch 1945-1948 na ceste ku komunistickej totalite* [Slovakia in 1945-1948 on the Road To Communist Totality], Bratislava, Ústredie slovenskej kresťanskej inteligencie v Bratislave, 1994, p.157. — "Obuch, Ladislav Čulen, and Jozef Fickuliak supplied Ďurčanský with important material regarding the political background, the negotiations of the government, copies of laws and decrees, unusual articles in the press etc." Róbert Letz, "Slovenská politická emigrácia z roku 1945 a ohlas na jej činnosť doma [The Slovak Political Emigration of 1945 and the Response to its Activity at Home]", *In Slovenský povojnový exil. Zborník materiálov zo seminára Dejiny slovenského exilu po roku 1945 v Matici slovenskej v Martine 27. -28. júna 1996* [The Slovak Post-war Émigrés. Papers from the Seminar "The History of the Slovak Émigrés after 1945" organized by Matica slovenská in Martin on June 27th — 28th, 1996], Martin, Matica slovenská, 1998, p.118.

¹⁷ For details of the political background of the "anti-state conspiracy" see: Michal Barnovský, *Na ceste k monopolu moci. Mocenskopolitické zápasy na Slovensku v rokoch 1945-1948* [On the Road to Monopoly of Power. Power-political Struggles in Slovakia in 1945-1948], Bratislava, Archa, 1993, pp.161-207; Róbert Letz, *Slovensko v rokoch 1945-1948 na ceste ku komunistickej totalite*, pp.156-176 and p.230.

After seizing power in February of 1948, between April 19th and 29th in Bratislava, the Communist regime tried Otto Obuch and his followers. Obuch was sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment. Ladislav Čulen received 18 years for being a party to "the anti-state conspiracy" which intended to overthrow the Czechoslovak Government and to restore the independent Slovak State. Ex-deputy-P.M. Ursíny, who was allegedly involved in the affair, was sentenced to seven years in prison.¹⁸ Ladislav Čulen was heavily punished, perhaps, as a warning to his older brother. Konštantín Čulen wrote to Rondoš on May 7th as follows:

[...] in Bratislava they tried my brother as an "Anglo-American" spy and the prosecutor demanded the death penalty. Well, we were in bitter and tense expectation of what would happen and how everything would develop. He received 18 years' imprisonment, which is the second heaviest sentence among the accused. The Czech judge [K.] Bedrna sentenced the accused in all to 85 years. In the Hungarian Kingdom, during the last century, Slovaks were sentenced to about 78 years and, now, at one stroke they got so much more, and it is still said that they are "liberated." Besides, they treated my brother so badly that he will take it very hard. The worst thing is that everything was unnecessary, that if there had been no stupidity by [Ferdinand)] Ďurčanský, his unnecessary propagandizing and forecasting of war, his unneces-

¹⁸ "Ján Ursíny, bývalý podpredseda č-s vlády, bol odsúdený na 7 rokov väzenia ("Ján Ursíny, former Deputy Prime Minister of the Czechoslovak government, was sentenced to 7 years in prison), *Slovenská obrana*, May 4th, 1948. On Ursíny's memories of this episode see: Ján Ursíny, *Z môjho života (Príspevok k vývoju slovenskej národnej myšlienky)*. [From my Life (Contribution to the Development of the Slovak National Idea)], Martin, Matica slovenská, 2000, pp.134-149.

sary instigating of young enthusiasts, of careless people, the trial would not have taken place.¹⁹

Čulen also wrote about the matter in his letter of May 13th:

Otherwise from the country [Slovakia] there is always only news about trials. My brother was already sentenced as an "Anglo-American" spy; however, I can enter neither England nor America. Isn't it a little strange? In the country they would like to try me as a collaborator with Americans. How this world is confused!

On May 28th and 29th, in the local court in Bratislava, Konštantín Čulen was tried in absentia. One of the Slovak newspapers reported:

¹⁹ "The State Security Police (ŠTB) took advantage of the activities of the Slovak Action Committee. Even though the activity of the Committee brought important arguments about the struggle for the Slovak statehood back home, it also enabled State Security to manufacture "the anti-state conspiracy" and to accuse the Catholic wing of the Democratic Party of cooperating with political émigrés, which they interpreted as anti-state activity. Róbert Letz, "Slovenská politická emigrácia z roku 1945 a ohlas na jej činnosť doma", In *Slovenský povojnový exil*, pp.118-119. For details of the illegal political movements in Slovakia after World War II see: Róbert Letz, *Slovensko v rokoch 1945-1948 na ceste ku komunistickej totalite*, pp. 129-176. See also the memoirs of one of the leading figures of the Slovak Action Committee, Štefan Polakovič, "Záznam o činnosti SAV-u [Records of the activity of the Slovak Action Committee]", In Štefan Polakovič and František Vnuk, *Zahraničné akcie na záchranu a obnovenie slovenskej samostatnosti (1943-1948)* [Activities Abroad for the Preservation and Renewal of Slovak Independence (1943-1948)], Lakewood-Hamilton, Slovak Research Institute of America, 1988, pp.109-225.

The people's court in Bratislava, with Dr. Artur Šipka presiding, tried in absentia on the 28th of this month Konštantín Čulen, former deputy of the Slovak Parliament. The Prosecutor accused Čulen of the following crimes: that as an important politician he worked for the dissolution of the Czechoslovak Republic [in 1939], that he supported the military and political interests of Nazi Germany, that he supported the declaring and making of war against the Soviet Union, that he thwarted the struggle of the Slovak nation for the restoration of the Czechoslovak Republic, that he became rich at the expense of other citizens, therefore he committed criminal acts of domestic treachery, collaboration, and treachery in the Uprising (of 1944). The public prosecutor of the trial is Dr. Arnošt Barát. Vojtech Vyčánek spoke in his defence. The written statement and documentary material presented was proof of his guilt. The sentence will be passed on Saturday at 9 o'clock.²⁰

Čulen wrote in his diary of June 2nd, which is cited in Vnuk's biography, as follows:

There is a newspaper with an article on my sentence - "Čulen - 30 years' Imprisonment: [...] Senate of Dr. Šipka of the people's court in Bratislava on Saturday of May 29th passed judgement on Konštantín Čulen who was sentenced in his absentia to 30 years' imprisonment, 15 years' divestiture of citizenship, and confiscation of all his property."

Only 30 years! They found me guilty of so many crimes and they gave me so few years! However, we two brothers, together with Laco [Ladislav Čulen] got from the Czechs al-

²⁰ František Vnuk, *Životopis Konštantína Čulena*, pp.139-140.

most the same number of years as all Slovaks had gotten during the entire Hungarian regime. These gentlemen succeeded so well. The state prosecutor was Arnošt Baráth, a Hungarian from Nitra, whose two brothers, Elemér and Zoltán, are in exile, and one of them has just left for Venezuela. Vojta ([Vojtech] Vyčánek, my old acquaintance, pleaded on my behalf. I am indeed curious how he did it. I wrote in a hurry an article for *Jednota* [a Slovak nationalist newspaper in the United States] where I just dealt with the curiosity that they could find for my trial neither a Slovak judge nor a Slovak lawyer.²¹

Čulen also wrote to Rondoš on June 10th that "they sentenced my brother in Bratislava as an Anglo-American spy and confiscated all our property." These political trials perhaps dissuaded him from returning to Czechoslovakia and of surrendering to the "Bolsheviks".

The trial of Konštantín Čulen belonged to a series of political trials which took place at that time in Bratislava. A group of Slovak nationalist intellectuals in exile were judged in absentia as well. Karol Sidor, Reverend Ferdinand Mondok, and Jozef M. Kirschbaum were each sentenced to 20 years in prison. The historian František Hrušovský received ten years. It is worth mentioning that Čulen received the heaviest sentence.

In the meantime, Rondoš, who had been informed by Čulen's letter of April 1st that London had turned down his visa application, once again visited Senator Haig. The Senator promised to bring to Ottawa the notice of the Canadian Immigration

²¹ *Ibid.* p.140.

Office in Rome, which Čulen had sent, in order to tackle the matter at first hand (Rondoš's letter to Čulen of April 8th).

Late in May, when Rondoš went to Ottawa as a member of the delegation of the Canadian Slovak League, he visited the office of the International Refugee Organization (IRO), where he found a file according to which the entrance visa to Canada for Čulen and his family had already been issued on March 5th. Feeling doubtful about the situation, Rondoš met the secretary of Senator Haig (at that time Haig was not in Ottawa), and asked about the matter (letter of June 16th).

At Rondoš's request, Haig wrote a letter to the Department of Mines and Resources in Ottawa. He received an answer of July 6th from his acquaintance, Deputy Minister Keenleyside:

Since Mr. Kulen (sic) has been refused a visa for reasons of health, any review must be on medical grounds. Accordingly, the Director of Immigration has forwarded the entire file to the Departmental medical advisor, in order that we may have the benefit of his professional opinion.

The original certificate was severe and I would not wish, at this time, to raise any hope on the part of the applicant.

Just as soon as the file is returned, I shall promptly advise you and, in view of your representation, I sincerely hope the medical findings are favourable.

On July 14th, Haig sent a copy of this letter to Rondoš. In the morning of July 16th, Rondoš visited the District Superintendent of the Immigration Branch, Munroe, who called him the day before. In Rondoš's letter of July 15th to Čulen, we have a detailed report of their conversation. Based on it, we will reproduce Rondoš's petition. Rondoš and Munroe talked for over one hour

about Čulen's entrance into Canada. Naturally, they also talked about his medical examination in Rome:

Munroe: They did not say that Mr. Čulen is really weak, but he has a medical history. By the way, how do you know these people? Why did you help to raise the Čulen matter?

Rondoš reported all the circumstances.

Munroe: I know the Senator [Haig] from childhood and we are now very good friends. Well, how did you get in contact with Mr. [T.P.] Devlin, the chairman of the colonization of immigrants for West Canada?

Rondoš began to explain.

Munroe: It is enough. I was informed by Mr. Devlin about what you are asking me. Do you support the application which Mr. Volek submitted? According to it Mr. Čulen will work on his farm.

Rondoš: I am sure from his letter that Mr. Čulen will work on the farm. In Canada nobody will take care of him. He is responsible for himself.

Munroe: I have information that he is highly educated.

Rondoš: It is true, but he had his own farm in Slovakia and he understands farmer's work.

Munroe: If Mr. Čulen enters Canada and cannot work on Mr. Volek's farm, I was told that your organization [the Canadian Slovak League] would help him, because he is a writer and can write good anti-Communist articles. Is it true?

Rondoš: I have a secret which I would not normally reveal. But I recognise that I am talking with a high state official, so I confess to you. I have a close connection with the Royal Police in Canada [RCMP] and I provide them with information about Communist activities. When a Czech agita-

tor comes here and the Police really want to know about his purpose, they ask me to participate in their meeting. Mr. Čulen already sent me articles about what Communists write about Canada. These articles were sent long ago to the police office. If you want to know about them, call and ask such-and-such an officer, whether or not I indeed provided them with articles which Mr. Čulen sent me from Rome. And our organization works against turning Canada "Red". If Mr. Čulen could not work for Mr. Volek, our organization will help him. If you need some assurances for the help, I am ready to offer it.

Munroe: I am satisfied with your words. I do not demand any assurances. I already heard personally about your activity and, according to the information which state officials sent me, I recognize your words as true. By the way, does Mr. Čulen not have the intention to go to his brother [Štefan Čulen] in America?

Rondoš: When Mr. Čulen comes to Canada, he will become a citizen of this country. Because he is educated and we Slovaks in Canada do not have such people, we very much need educated people here. His brother in Chicago is only an ordinary worker. He cannot help him.

Munroe: Is Mr. Volek satisfied that he provided one year ago an application for Mr. Čulen's entry to Canada?

Rondoš: Yes. If you do not believe me, please call the Senator. He knows Mr. Volek well and he will prove to you that Mr. Volek is waiting for Mr. Čulen.

Munroe: I am glad that you told me the truth. I will send a report to Ottawa that Mr. Čulen is awaited in Canada. And I agree with it.

At the end of the conversation, Munroe called his secretary and ordered him to dictate a letter to Ottawa that he (Munroe) supports Čulen's entry into Canada. However, in spite of Rondoš's "frank" petition and Munroe's "guarantee", on August 9th, Senator Haig received from the Acting Deputy Minister of the Department of Mines and Resources, R. A. Gibson, a polite notice of refusal (of July 30th):

The [Čulen] file has been returned to the Director of Immigration from the Departmental Medical Adviser and, I regret to inform you, the original diagnosis has been confirmed. Under the circumstances, the Immigration officials in Rome cannot be instructed to issue a visa for the Culen [sic] family.

Undoubtedly Mr. Volek will be disappointed with these developments but the Immigration Branch can be of no further assistance in the matter.

Haig transmitted the notice on the same day to Rondoš with the short comment: "I got a very disappointing letter this morning which I enclose. I don't think anything further can be done." Rondoš reported to Čulen in a letter of August 17th: "Believe me, it [the notice] shocked me so much that I lay down and fell asleep. [...] I waited while everything passed away. I went to the Senator's office. He was at home and said the following :

Haig: George [Juraj], I am sorry about such mean news.

Rondoš: Mr. Senator, I had an important meeting with Mr. Munroe, the chief (of the Immigration Department) for Western Canada. It was July 15th. In the letter [from R. A. Gibson] he wrote that they received from England a message

of decisive refusal. In my mind, an answer from England was hardly reached between July 15th and 30th, especially an official answer through Ottawa. I would like to know whether in Ottawa any Czech communist conducts the immigration administration or not.

Munroe: I also think that the answer should have come later. George, go to the Immigration Department and once more ask directly for Mr. Munroe.

Next Morning (perhaps on August 11th) Rondoš called Munroe and got an appointment to meet at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. He was welcomed.

Rondoš: Sorry about disturbing you, but I feel nervous and I would like to know the situation thoroughly.

Rondoš again explained to him, as he did to the Senator, and handed him the letter from Ottawa. Munroe read it and called his secretary, telling him to bring Čulen's file. When he brought it, Munroe read once more the letter which he had written concerning Čulen to Ottawa on July 15th.

Munroe: Do not take the letter which you received from Ottawa seriously. It is written in Ottawa on July 30th, but my letter to them was sent only on July 29th. So it is not the answer to my letter. Mr. Rondoš, the fact that I sent to Ottawa the letter is the same as if I personally went there in order to carry out the matter. Do not worry because I have not yet received an answer to my letter.

And Munroe took the copy of his letter to read what he had written: "According to my special meeting with Mr. Rondoš, I approve of the entrance of Mr. Čulen to Canada."

Afterwards, Čulen had a long wait. In his letters to Rondoš we find such sentences as: "The Canadian [Immigration] Office has

not replied yet." (Letter of September 6th, 1948), "We know how officials work, so we are not surprised at all." (Letter of September 18th), "We are waiting until they finally invite us and say - Here are your papers and here is your visa. Since nothing had happened, I went to ask them privately. We heard that they indeed received some letter and they have just answered it. We do not know what kind of answer they received. Well, we can only guess as we wait, optimistically or pessimistically. However, it is certain that it will still take some time. But we are used to waiting patiently, so we will live with it." (Letter of October 9th), "Besides, nothing special has happened. We are waiting, as we waited one year, two years, or three years ago. Slowly we will look like Jews who are also waiting for the Messiah." (Letter of November 6th), "We expected last year that we would not have to celebrate Christmas and Easter [sic] by letter, but that we would do it orally. Well, our plans did not materialize and we must one year later wish you Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year by letter." (Letter of December 6th), "Till now the local (Immigration) Office did not move even an inch on the matter, so to speak. We are still waiting for them to invite us, but in vain. We do not know what has happened. Now it seems that it has been moved, somebody, somewhere, puts a brake on it." (Letter of December 27th).

In August of this year, when Rondoš visited Haig's office, he suggested, half jokingly, the possibility of "sabotage by a Czech communist". Being psychologically exhausted from the long wait, Čulen began to suspect that his entry to Canada had been blocked by the political intervention of "the enemies". He wrote to Rondoš on January 10th, 1949: "It would be interesting to find out why it all happened. I think that my health was not the question, but it

was Czech political interference." In his letter of March 29th, the conjecture changed into conviction:

General (Mola) visited the Canadian (Immigration) office to ask whether by chance they had something new. There were new officials there, so they began to check various papers and finally revealed that the difficulty was not caused by an X-ray, but by something else. Well, it might be only political. And if political, it is clear that it was Czech interference. I know that they were not pleased with my appearance there. [...] Because the fact is that there is not a greater enemy than a Czech. If it were possible, Czechs would drown us in a teaspoonful of water.

Čulen's biographer Vnuk also suggested the possibility of "enemy's intervention".²² However, it is still unclear whether some pro-Czechoslovak groups (for example, the Czechoslovak National Alliance in Canada) or pro-Communist groups really did it or not.

Meanwhile, waiting for an answer from the Canadian Immigration Office, Čulen did not waste his time. After the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia in February of 1948, the Slovak nationalist group in exile led by Karol Sidor began its political activities. In this period Čulen participated, in addition to his ordinary work as a journalist, in two actions.

The first was his radio broadcasting to Slovakia. We read in Čulen's letter of November 16th, 1947, the following:

²² *Ibid.* p.133.

[...] the radio station Free Slovakia has started to operate in Europe. It broadcasts every day for two hours. Soon Radio Free Europe will have Slovak programmes, so the Iron curtain between Slovakia and the rest of the world will be breached and we can open our mouths again. There is much work with it, but it is joyful. Well, on such radio stations we already cite what your *Kanadský Slovák* [the organ of the Canadian Slovak League] writes. We will have to arrange a quicker sending of the editorial page of *Kanadský Slovák* in order to give our people at home more fresh news. Now we are waiting for a reaction from our homeland.²³

In his letter of December 6th Čulen also wrote the following:

Now there is much to do. We prepare materials for our broadcasting to Slovakia. We hope it will be perfect. Well, every day half an hour is enough work for one person. One station is already operating. From the New Year on the Italian government will start short wave broadcasting every day for ten minutes. I hear that even in London [BBC] the Czech and Slovak broadcasting will be divided. If then the Canadian government wants the people in Slovakia to listen to their programmes [CBC International Service which started in 1945], they will have to do the same thing. If people at home will have the possibility to listen to programmes in the Slovak spirit, nobody will tune in to the Czechoslovak jumble.

²³ The Czechoslovak section of Radio Free Europe (RFE) began regular programming in May of 1951. However, the division between the Czech and Slovak sections, which Čulen had expected, did not materialize. On this problem see: Imrich Kružliak, "Rádio Slobodná Európa a Slováci [Radio Free Europe and the Slovaks]", In *Slovenský povojnový exil*, pp.338-344.

Everything which is connected with the Czechs is bad for the Slovaks.

As Čulen wrote, from the beginning of 1949 the Rome station began to provide Slovak programmes. He cooperated actively with it, writing articles and reading lectures. He wrote to Rondoš on April 26th that "Now I have much work, for every Sunday I have a radio lecture for Slovakia and people there listen to it very carefully."

Čulen's second political activity of this period was participation in the newly established political organization of the Slovak nationalists in exile. In May of 1948 an agreement to establish a new organization was made between the group led by Karol Sidor and the Slovak National Council in London which was organized in January, 1944, by Peter Prídavok. On the front page of *Kanadský Slovák* of December 16th, they announced the formation of the Slovak National Council Abroad as the coordinating body in the struggle for "the Slovak State within a federalized Europe".²⁴ It was dated Christmas of 1948 (in reality, it was published in the middle of December) and signed by Karol Sidor (as the president) and by Peter Prídavok (as the general secretary). The main organizer was Jozef Kirschbaum. Čulen supported him, and became one of its vice-presidents and at the same time chief of its Italian branch.²⁵

²⁴ "Slovenská Národná Rada v Zahraničí utvorená [Creation of the Slovak National Council Abroad]", *Kanadský Slovák*, December 16th, 1948.

²⁵ On the activities of the Slovak National Council Abroad see: František Vnuk, "Slovenská národná rada v Londýne a v zahraničí (1943-1948) (The Slovak National Council in London and Abroad (1943-1948))", In Štefan Polakovič and František Vnuk, *Zahraničné akcie na záchranu a obnovenie slovenskej samostatnosti (1943-1948)*, pp.1-108; Genovéva Grácová, "Dve koncepcie boja za slovenskú štátnosť (Two conceptions of the struggle for Slovak statehood)",

With respect to this, Rondoš wrote to Čulen on December 18th that "the article of Mr. Sidor and Mr. Prídavok [above-mentioned] was published in [*Kanadský*] *Slovák* and it provides evidence of the revival of the independence movement. [...] As you are actively engaged in it, you are perhaps busy with it.

Čulen, meanwhile, reported to Rondoš on January 18th, 1949:

Otherwise we are led by the Slovak National Council [Abroad]. The press in Europe pays much attention to it. The Spanish press evaluated the meaning of this step as most important among all the European nations which are occupied by Communists. Even the Swiss press pays attention to our organization. We may say that until now not even one of our Slovak affairs created such a reaction. Yesterday American journalists visited the Minister [Sidor]. I was with them for half a day and we talked with them.

In February of 1949 Čulen departed for Paris, together with Sidor and Kirschbaum in order to negotiate with French government officials regarding the activities of the Slovak National Council Abroad. They arrived in Paris on February 20th. We found in the file of correspondence between Sidor and Rondoš a post-card from Paris dated February 21st: "We sincerely greet you and on the occasion of the meeting of the Slovak National Council Abroad we remember you." The card was written by Čulen and signed: Konšto [Konštantín] Čulen, Karol Sidor, Laco [Ladislav] Jankovič, and J. Kirschbaum.

In *Slovenský povojnový exil*, pp.82-84; František Vnuk, "Aktivity exilu - obsahova slovenskej štátnosti v rokoch 1945-1948 [Activities of the émigrés - The Defense of Slovak Statehood in 1945-1948]", in *Ibid.* p.90.

On February 28th Čulen returned to Rome. On March 29th he wrote: "There is now much work to do with the Slovak National Council [Abroad]. We described what had happened, and where we visited. I asked them to send you a copy in order to inform you. However, it is a confidential report and not for publication."

Meanwhile, on May 6th, 1949, Senator Haig received a notice (dated April 30th) from the Deputy Minister of the Department of Mines and Resources, Keenleyside:

You may recall that on July 30th, 1948 Mr. R. A. Gibson [Acting Deputy Minister of the Department] wrote advising favourable consideration in the case of Konstantin Culen and family, Czechoslovakian refugees in the Vatican City, could not be extended due to Mr. Culen's failure to comply with our medical requirements.

You will now be pleased to know that on reviewing the entire situation it has been decided to allow this family to come forward provided Mr. Culen's state of health is no worse than indicated and they can otherwise meet with the Immigration Regulations. The necessary advice in the matter has been transmitted to our office in Rome, Italy in order that appropriate action may be taken on behalf of these persons.

I trust that it will not be too long before this family will be in a position to come forward.

Having received the notice, Haig sent a short message to Rondoš: "Dear George: I enclose [for] you a letter received this morning from Ottawa. This looks [like] better news. When you come in bring this letter back with you."

Rondoš, in turn, informed Čulen of the delightful news in a letter of May 8th:

I cannot stop myself from informing you. The day before yesterday I received a letter from the Senator in which he informed me that your matter had moved and that now everything is on track. He [the Senator] also sent me the letter which he had received, but he asked me to bring it back to him when I would visit his office. So I typed it once more, how Ottawa classified you, and I attach it with this letter. You will read in it that Ottawa informed the office in Italy [to issue a visa] if you are not weaker than at the last examination. I hope you understand the letter, so I did not write more.

Indeed, Rondoš did not mention in the letter any more about the matter. However, he could feel deep satisfaction that he had finally achieved his intended objective after a long struggle with the bureaucracy. Čulen received the good news about May 15th (Vnuk writes that Čulen received on May 18th the invitation from the Canadian selection committee).²⁶ He reported to Rondoš further developments in his letter of May 22nd:

On the day that I received your letter attached with the notice [from Keenleyside] to the Senator, they already called me from the consulate and at the same time they invited me also by letter to come there. When we arrived, they were very nice to us, full of willingness. If my health condition, they said, does not worsen, they will give me the visa. I was sent again for a medical examination. I had to go to Naples where the IRO camp is. We spent three days there, and finally we received the medical report which we now have to hand over to IRO. They have to issue us a new passport, because the old

²⁶ František Vnuk, *Životopis Konštantína Čulena*, p.147.

one is already invalid. Then I have to again go to the consulate and there we will be told the results. At this moment I do not know them, but before sending this letter I will perhaps know, so I inform you at the end of the letter. I am really curious as to whether they will give me the visa or not, whether the old comedy of sending the documents to London and then from London to Ottawa, repeats itself, as it did the first time.

After the previous disappointments, Čulen was very skeptical about the results, but this time they proved to be positive. In the second half of the same letter he wrote: "We just came back from the consulate. Well, my dear friend Rondoš, you won. We have the visa and, if nothing else happens, I will take part in the Congress [the 8th Convention of the Canadian Slovak League] as you wished."

It took Čulen two years to secure the entry visa to Canada. He should have felt deep satisfaction. Instead, it caused him a new kind of anxiety. At the end of the same letter he added: "However, now, the most serious problem will be to find suitable work. Is it possible to become an assistant editor at *Kanadský Slovák*? Of course, the others would have to approve. Or, perhaps, I will find something else. Well, I think that many people succeeded there, so I will do so somehow as well."

Afterwards, Čulen was busy for days preparing for the journey: "I already bought the steamship ticket and railway ticket. I will not use the IRO transportation as I originally had to, but I will go privately, because this month there is no transportation and next month they still do not know when. So, I bought a ticket for Vulkania [perhaps Čulen's mistake. It had to be Saturnia], the Italian ship, which will leave on June 21st direct to Halifax. So

perhaps about July 1st I will arrive in Canada. Then, I will board a train and depart for Winnipeg. [...] Now we are just packing and saying good-bye to Rome." (Letter of June 11th) "Just now the ship company called that my ship Saturnia will leave port not on the 21st, as I was originally informed, but on the 18th. In one word, this week. So I am packing quickly, since it changed unexpectedly." (Letter of June 12th)

Čulen then sent a post-card to Rondoš on June 15th from Lido di Ostia, a port in the suburbs of Rome. He wrote: "Saying good-bye to Rome, I am looking forward to seeing you soon". Beside his signature there are several others: A. Čulenová (his wife), Eva Čulenová (daughter), Karol Sidor, Angela Sidorová (Sidor's wife), M. Doránska (Ján Doránsky's wife), Ladislav Pudiš, and J. Kirschbaum etc.

Another post-card was sent to Rondoš on June 17th, this time from Naples: "Dear friend, saying good-bye to friends on the beach, we all remember you most heartily. We send you our greetings and I look forward to seeing you soon." We noticed the signatures of Konštantín Čulen, A. Čulenová, Angela Sidorová, Karol Sidor, and Ferdinand Mondok. Perhaps they came from Rome to Naples to see him off. Čulen's Italian friend, General Armando Mola also signed with a short English message: "We are all happy & and unhappy!" Needless to say that they were "unhappy" to part with Čulen.

However, before the departure, one more problem arose. The steamship on which Čulen was supposed to sail from Naples on June 18th, cancelled the voyage. In a letter of June 22nd from Naples he explained:

Certainly you read in the newspaper that here in Italy the crew of the steamship Saturnia, on which I was to depart,

went on strike. I have been stuck here in Naples for a week. I am sick with worry. Nobody knows anything, so they tell us "Come tomorrow". The next day they tell us "In the afternoon", in the afternoon they tell us "Tomorrow". Fortunately, I take it with some humour, so I do not get angry, not even insulted. I tell myself that I will at last find some ship on which they do not strike and I will depart on it. Today they promised us that the steamship Sobieski will carry us. [...] According to today's information this ship will depart on June 28th.

In spite of Čulen's skepticism, the ship did, indeed, depart on June 28th. He wrote in a letter of the same day from Naples: "Well, finally it appears that I will indeed say good-bye to Europe and the Sobieski will finally move out with us. So sometime around July 14th I will arrive in Canada." Čulen departed alone, because his family planned to leave Italy a month later.

Čulen's protector Sidor wrote from the Vatican to Rondoš on June 29th (in the file of correspondence between Sidor and Rondoš): "We are all really happy that on June 28th on the steamship Sobieski Konšto Čulen left Italy." It is interesting to note that Sidor in the same letter continued as follows:

I do not know what you intend to do with Konšto Čulen. My personal opinion is that it will be best for him to go to the editor of *Kanadský Slovák*, [Štefan] Hreha. Hreha and he could make of *Kanadský Slovák* such a newspaper which even Slovaks in the United States do not have. I wrote to editor Hreha, too, but I would like to ask you to discuss with your friends the proposal of acceptance of Čulen as an

assistant editor, to recommend it and suggest to the competent authorities of the Canadian Slovak League to accept it.

It is not clear whether Sidor made the suggestion on his own initiative, or whether Čulen asked him to do so. In either case, judging by the prestige which Sidor had at that time as the president of the Slovak National Council Abroad, it could almost be interpreted as an order.

The steamship Jan Sobieski stopped at Genoa (on June 29th), Cannes (on June 30th), and Gibraltar (on July 2nd). On that day Čulen sent to Rondoš his last letter from Europe:

My journey was delayed whole ten days owing to the sailors' strike. [...] Life on board ship is quite good. It is full of Italian emigrants who go to Canada. There are some Jews too, but they go to USA. We can hear many languages. However, most people are travelling with the hope that their life abroad will be better than at home. [...]

Today the sea is slightly stormy, so most passengers sigh and feed the fish. For me, nothing ever happened on the sea. Otherwise I am using my time on the ship to study English, everyday for several hours. I hope that in Canada, when I will have the opportunity to listen and speak, it will come to me fairly quickly. And I believe that in a short time I will master English so that I will be able to communicate fairly well. Otherwise, I read books and newspapers quite well.

At the end of the letter Čulen wrote with some emotion:

This is the last letter from European shores which I will send you. We have exchanged many letters. I sometimes felt pity for you and admired you. Because I saw that other

people also received many letters from you. Where did this person find the time? I asked myself. You will certainly be glad that one of your troublemakers will drop off your list. I will always remember your struggle on my behalf and I intend to somehow record it.

This letter was written on a typewriter with Slovak phonetic characters. Perhaps Čulen brought his favourite typewriter with him.

The voyage and the arrival in Canada witnessed no problems. The Sobieski smoothly crossed the Atlantic Ocean in one week and arrived in Halifax on July 10th. On the same day Čulen sent a telegram to Rondoš in English: "Safely arrived to [sic] Halifax expect me about Sunday". The second half of the telegraph meant that he would arrive in Winnipeg by train around July 17th. In his letter of July 11th, which was written on the train from Halifax to Montreal, Čulen reported as follows: "In [Halifax] harbour a young Slovak named Janega awaited me. They say that Mr. Kunda sent him. He helped me with my baggage; we had a chat and a snack. His willingness was very much appreciated."

Čulen arrived in Montreal on the evening of July 11th. *Kanadský Slovák* of July 21st reported as follows: "Writer K. Čulen in Canada — on the way to the West he stopped at Montreal and Toronto."²⁷ It then continued,

In the evening of Monday [July 11th] arrived in Montreal one of the prominent Slovak writers, politicians and publicists, a nationalist and uncompromising defender of Slovak truth [an independent Slovak state] — Konštantín Čulen.

²⁷ "Spisovateľ K. Čulen v Kanade [The Writer K. Čulen in Canada]", *Kanadský Slovák*, July 21st, 1949.

At the Windsor Station prominent members of the Slovak community in Montreal welcomed him, along with a group of Slovak émigrés. On Tuesday, in the National Home of the Canadian Slovak League, a small party was organized in his honour. Officials of the League and the Canadian Jednota and other persons took part in it. On behalf of Slovaks living in Montreal, chairpersons of associations welcomed K. Čulen. In his speech Mr. Čulen promised to cooperate, declaring that every Slovak emigrant should have participated in the national activities of the Canadian Slovaks.

On July 14th Čulen left Montreal and, after stopping in Toronto, in the morning of July 16th he departed for Winnipeg, sending again a telegram in English to Rondoš : "Arriving CPR (Canadian Pacific Railway) 9 A.M. standard time Sunday". As expected, he arrived in Winnipeg in the morning of July 17th and was welcomed by Rondoš . It must have been a very dramatic scene.

Čulen then participated in the 8th Convention of the Canadian Slovak League in Winnipeg.²⁸ At the convention he was elected

²⁸ According to the Minutes of the 8th Convention, Čulen said the following on the first day (July 25th): "I do not want to speak long. I intend to visit all Slovak colonies (in Canada). I bring you the greetings of Minister Sidor, the president of the Slovak National Council Abroad, and also the greetings of students, theologians, and other Slovaks from Italy [The greetings, with the signatures of Karol Sidor and Jozef Kirschbaum of May 19th, 1949, were published at the end of the Minutes]. I bow down to your work. I come to you to contribute to the prosperity and enlargement of the Canadian Slovak League." *Zápisnica z VIII. kongresu Kanadskej slovenskej ligy, vydržiavaného v dňoch 25., 26., 27. a 28. júla 1949 v hoteli Marlborough* [The Minutes of the 8th Convention of the Canadian Slovak League, held on July 25th - 28th, 1949, in the Hotel Marlborough], Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, p.2. On the second day (July 26th) participants discussed the "Sidor versus Ďuršanský" problem. The following com-

as an assistant editor of the League's newspaper *Kanadský Slovák*. The convention also resolved that the Canadian Slovak League, along with the Slovak League of America, recognized the Slovak National Council Abroad as "the competent representative to speak on behalf of the subjugated Slovak nation at home" (*Kanadský Slovák*, August 11th, 1949).

At the beginning of August Čulen returned from Winnipeg to Montreal where the editorial offices of *Kanadský Slovák* were located. His wife and daughter, who entered Canada through New York, on August 11th, came to Montreal as well. After having found an apartment, Čulen began to again work as a journalist. Although it took two long years, Čulen had finally succeeded in finding "a place where we could begin a new life and work and live in safety" (Letter of June 6th, 1947).

Although this article should end on this happy note, it cannot. Even though he became an assistant editor of the newspaper

promise was reached: "they concluded that brother president [Andrej Kučera] should read the resolution on the recognition of the Slovak National Council Abroad and that the Council headed by Karol Sidor, who is the competent representative to speak on behalf of the subjugated Slovak nation at home. For Dr. Ďurčanský a letter has to be written in which they pronounce their esteem for his work for the freedom of the Slovak nation. *Ibid.* p.18. In the morning session of the last day (July 28th) Rondoš made a proposal to accept Čulen into the editorial office of *Kanadský Slovák*. Karol Murín (former personal secretary of Jozef Tiso) and Father Ján Zeman supported the proposal and it met with general approval. In the evening session "Konštantín Čulen was elected as an assistant editor with applause. He is grateful for his election and promises to make efforts to build up the newspaper. He also will do his best to propagate the Canadian Slovak League with all his might. He promises editor [Štefan] Hreha that he will be a loyal workmate. They will help each other, for brother Hreha knows Canada and the Canadian situation well and he [Čulen] knows in turn Slovakia and the European situation." *Ibid.* pp.27-28. Also see the article "Po VIII. kongrese Kanadskej slovenskej ligy [After the 8th Convention of the Canadian Slovak League]", *Kanadský Slovák*, August 11th, 1949.

Kanadský Slovák, Čulen moved to Winnipeg in March of 1952, because the League had bought a small printery there. At that time he became the editor-in-chief. However, he became dissatisfied with this position, resigned in July, 1956, and moved to the United States. In September of the same year he became director of the Slovak Institute in Cleveland (Ohio) after the sudden death of the former director, the historian František Hrušovský.

Now his personal relations with leading members of Slovak organizations in the United States became complicated (His mimeographed work "*V zajatí falošných legend a nenávistného srdca* (In the Grip of False Legends and an Unforgiving Heart)" which was published in New York in 1961, deals with this problem). Therefore, in September of 1958 he was dismissed from the Institute. Čulen continued to write until his death on April 7th, 1964 in New York. His simple tombstone with the English inscription: "Čulen / Konštantín / Slovak historian / and writer / born in 1904 / died in 1964" stands modestly on the grounds of the Slovak cemetery in Passaic (New Jersey).

* * *

Having reconstructed Čulen's tortuous attempts to emigrate to Canada, we may conclude the following. Someone as famous as the nationalist journalist Čulen could have had some advantages; he received the help of the influential Juraj Rondoš, who shared Čulen's nationalism. Thanks to Rondoš's strong personal connections with Senator J. T. Haig, Čulen's matter was dealt with by the local government official, R. N. Munroe in Winnipeg. The matter reached even the Deputy Minister of the Department of Mines and Resources, H. L. Keenleyside, who was in charge of immigration to Canada. In Rome Čulen was helped by the former Slovak

Minister to the Vatican, Karol Sidor, and also by the Italian General A. Mola who had connections with the Canadian Minister to Italy, J. Désy. In spite of such advantages, Čulen had to struggle for two years with the Canadian bureaucracy before securing an entry visa to Canada.

Owing to Čulen's past as a strong supporter of the independent Slovak State, which during World War II was allied with Nazi Germany, he had to make some false statements in his application. However, it seems that the Canadian authorities did not care much about them. Čulen's standing as an "anti-communist writer" may have helped him. It is clear that Čulen's health record complicated and delayed the process of his entry to Canada. It is not clear whether it had been blocked by the political intervention of his "enemies".

Juraj Rondoš's self-sacrificing efforts on behalf of Čulen were impressive. His strong will and activities, which were evident in the struggle with the Canadian bureaucracy, were truly surprising. Čulen expressed admiration and gratitude to him: "Whenever I meet with Minister Sidor, we almost always talk about your work with admiration, which will remain as a beautiful example of quiet and determined efforts with patriotic eagerness. Very seldom in life does one experience such work." (Čulen's letter to Rondoš of December 6th, 1948). When Konštantín's younger brother, Štefan Čulen visited his brother in Montreal at the end of October, 1949, "he [Štefan Čulen] was also very thankful to you [Rondoš] and he just does not understand that a man, who did not know us at all, could fight for us so courageously and finally win." (Letter of Konštantín Čulen's wife, Alžbeta Čulenová, to the Rondoš family of October 31st, 1949).

Later a rumour was circulated among Slovak immigrant communities in Canada, according to which Rondoš received mo-

ney from the Canadian government for helping immigrants. However, Čulen doubted the rumour and Rondoš rejected it decisively in his memoirs. Judging by the contents of his correspondence, Rondoš's good faith is clear and we probably can accept his explanation that "I worked from love of Slovak affairs and not for money".²⁹

²⁹ K. Čulen wrote in an anonymous article as follows: "There are many of us in Canada who may thank the Canadian Slovak League for our emigration and for the fact that we again live as human beings and that we again stand on our feet and we are out of the camps of poverty. They may also thank brother Rondoš who did this work in the name of the League. He [Rondoš] did it courageously and conscientiously. Many know well the Slovak's worst failing, namely envy, and they began to spread gossip, saying that he [Rondoš] is a good businessman who receives 100 dollars from the Canadian government for every emigrant. Many emigrants were also angry with his alleged earning of 100 dollars for this purpose. When once someone told me that, I [Čulen] answered him: "I feel offended. In my mind, Rondoš should get for me at least 1,000 dollars. If I was rich and had the money, and if the Canadian government did not give him the money, as in reality it did not, I would give him for every member of my family 1,000 dollars. Even so, it would not be enough for all that he has done." Anonym [Konštantín Čulen], "Ujo Rondoš", *Kalendár Kanadskej slovenskej ligy*, 1953, p.211. Rondoš himself reminisced about the episode in his later years as follows: "When after World War II our fellow-countrymen dispersed around the world, I tried to get as many of them to Canada as possible. I took charge of the help and the [Canadian] Colonization Office helped me. I managed to get many families and individuals into this country. However, there were certain people who accused me of being paid by the Canadian government up to 2,000 dollars for single families. Of course, this was just a fairy tale. I worked from love of Slovak affairs and not for money. I even spent my own money by constant running around and arranging of documents for Slovak emigrants." Juraj Rondoš, "Moje rozpomienky na zašlé časy", *Ibid.* 1982, p.54.

In his correspondence Konštantín Čulen repeatedly promised to write the story of his immigration to Canada. He never did so.³⁰ This article is an attempt to do it for him.

³⁰ Meanwhile, we identified the following articles in which Čulen mentioned Rondoš: Konštantín Čulen, "Dôležité pre nových emigrantov [Important News for New Emigrants]", *Kanadský Slovák*, September 15th, 1949; Anonym [Konštantín Čulen], "Ujo Rondoš", *Kalendár Kanadskej slovenskej ligy*, 1953, pp. 209-212.

DOCUMENTATION:

THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND CULTURAL SITUATION IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC (AS OF MAY, 1995)

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(Paper Presented to the Symposium "Economies in Transition: Europe to the Bering Strait, University of Montana, Missoula, May 1, 1995)¹

It is difficult to paint a clear picture of contemporary Slovakia because this newly-independent country is still undergoing revolutionary changes at all levels of society due to the collapse of Communism in 1989. Since there is no model for the Slovaks (or other states of East Central Europe) to follow in the transition from totalitarian Communism to democratic Capitalism, the current Slovak government is proceeding slowly and cautiously in this direction, amid much criticism. My observations are based on official and unofficial visits to Slovakia in the last five years, on

¹ This paper was supposed to have been published as a part of the *Proceedings* by the organizers of the symposium. Since the *Proceedings* never saw the light of day, the author decided to publish the article in *Slovakia* because it accurately reflected the political, economic and cultural situation in 1995 Slovakia. It should be read as a document of its time.

my reading of a portion of the Slovak and western press, on reports issued by Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America, and on long discussions with various government officials, who have asked to remain anonymous.

The political situation in the Slovak Republic is the most problematic. The Parliament (officially called the National Council of the Slovak Republic) consists of a unicameral legislature of 150 deputies who are elected to a four-year term on the basis of proportional representation. Slovakia has over 50 political parties but only seven of them (or party coalitions) are currently represented in Parliament. In order to run in an election, each new party must first obtain 10,000 certified signatures on a petition, and then must win at least 5% of the votes in order to obtain a seat. Party coalitions must win at least 10% of the vote. The seats are apportioned according to the percentage of votes won by each party.² The elections held on September 30-October 1, 1994, produced no clear winner, as is usual in a proportional representative system. Slovakia is currently governed by a coalition consisting of the left-of-center Movement for a Democratic Slovakia led by Vladimír Mečiar, which won 35% of the popular vote, or 61 seats; by the pro-communist Association of Workers of Slovakia led by Ján Lupták, which won 7.3% of the vote and 13 seats; and the ultra-nationalist Slovak National Party led by Ján Slota, which won 5.4% of the vote and 9 seats in Parliament. This coalition ended up with a grand total of 83 seats, although in April 1995 three members of the Association of Workers of Slovakia split with their leader and they reduced the coalition's voting majority

² For more details on the electoral process in the Slovak Republic see "The Constitution of the Slovak Republic," in Albert P. Blaustein & Gisbert H. Flanz, eds., *Constitutions of the Countries of the World* (Dobbs Ferry, New York: Oceana Publications, Inc., 1993), 84-88.

to 80 seats. The opposition consists of the left-wing coalition Common Choice led by Peter Weiss, with 10.4 % of the popular vote or 17 seats; the Coalition of Magyar Parties led by Miklós Duray, with 10.2% of the vote or 16 seats; the right-wing Christian Democratic Movement led by Ján Čarnogurský, with 10.1% of the votes or 16 seats; and the centrist Democratic Union of Slovakia led by Jozef Moravčík, with 8.6% of the vote or 13 seats.³

Current Slovak politics is dominated by one strong leader who seems determined to undercut, by whatever means possible, other political leaders, many of whom are his former friends and associates. Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar, who is an attorney by training, and who supported the reforms of Alexander Dubček in the 1960's, was purged from the ruling Communist Party in 1970, and later became a corporate lawyer near the city of Trenčín. He entered politics in 1990, when the ruling Public Against Violence, the group of intellectuals which took power from the Communists in Slovakia in November of 1989, advertized for the position of Minister of the Interior of the post-communist Slovak Republic. Mr. Mečiar won the competition and allegedly used his control over the Interior Ministry to both discover the past sins of his opponents, and to cover up those of his supporters. After the

³ "Slovakia's voters again turn to pugnacious former PM," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), October 3, 1994. The official election results were communicated to all embassies of the Slovak Republic by a "Tlačový telegram MZV SR pre zahraničnú diplomatickú službu SR," on October 3, 1994, of which I have a copy. For an analysis of the results see Martin Votruba's "Slovak News" (mimeographed), Slovak Studies Program, University of Pittsburgh, Sept. 27-Oct. 2, 1994. A much later analysis by Michael J. Kopanic, Jr., including the creation of the coalition, appeared as "The Recent Elections in Slovakia," in *Association for the Study of Nationalities: Analysis of Current Events*, 6 (No.9, May, 1995), 1-3. For the split in the Association of Workers in Slovakia see *Národná obroda*, April 4, 1995.

Public Against Violence won the largest percentage of the vote in the June elections of 1990, it selected Mr. Mečiar to become Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, which at that time was still a part of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic. While in this post, Mr. Mečiar allegedly joined with others in slowing or manipulating the process of investigating ("lustračný proces" in Slovak) whether or not high government officials had collaborated with, or served as agents, of the dreaded communist secret police. He also increasingly argued with the presidium of the Public Against Violence, and its coalition partner, the Christian Democratic Movement, over government policy.⁴

Even though Mr. Mečiar is very intelligent, is an excellent speaker, has a photographic memory, and radiates charisma wherever he goes, he appears to have what is colloquially known as a "type A" personality. In other words, he feels that he has to be in complete control of any situation, he seldom seeks advice, and is not very tolerant of criticism. He prefers to be surrounded by "yes

⁴ For a brief biography of Mečiar see *Kto je kto na Slovensku, 1991?* (Konzorcium Encyklopédia: Bratislava, 1991), 114-15; The allegations against Mečiar were made by his political opponents in the Slovak Parliament's Defense and Security Committee on November 7, 1991. cf. "'Secret Report' Claims Mečiar KGB Connections," *Foreign Broadcast Information Service* (Washington, D.C., hereafter FBIS), November 13, 1991, p.14; and summarized by Jan Obrman "Slovak Politician Accused of Secret Police Ties," *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Research Report* (hereafter *RFE/RL Research Report*), April 10, 1992. See also "Mečiar Proposes Repeal of Screening Law," CTK, December 21, 1993. Two highly-placed public servants in the Slovak government, one of whom worked in the Office of the Prime Minister for both Mr. Mečiar, and his predecessors, recently repeated these allegations to me. Since they fear for their jobs, these public servants have asked me to keep secret their names, and the circumstances of our meetings. At this time it is impossible to confirm, or disprove, these allegations since the files of the former secret police, which are in Prague, are not open to the public.

men".⁵ Since the governing coalition Presidium was also composed of some very strong personalities, who opposed Mr. Mečiar's attempts to become Chairman of the Public Against Violence in March of 1991, they decided to remove him from his Prime Ministerial post in April of that year. The Presidium replaced Mr. Mečiar with Ján Čarnogurský, an attorney and former Catholic dissident during the communist regime, who was also the founder and Chairman of the Christian Democratic Movement.⁶ Mr. Mečiar, and his most loyal supporters, subsequently withdrew from the Public Against Violence, which later fell apart, and they created the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, which won the largest percentage of the votes in the June, 1992 elections.⁷

In the next two years Mr. Mečiar reached the height of his glory, but also suffered the humiliation of defeat. It was Mr. Mečiar who in the summer of 1992, as Slovak Prime Minister, negotiated with Czech Prime Minister Václav Klaus the dissolution

⁵ This observation is based on my reading of the Slovak press, on observing Mr. Mečiar delivering a political address in Nitra in August, 1993, on a private meeting that I had with him in September, 1993, and on several discussions that I had with Mr. Igor Uhrík. The latter is a fervent Slovak nationalist who sold his successful industrial-insurance business in New York city in 1992 and returned to Slovakia to "help out" in 1993. He contributed 1,000,000 Slovak crowns to the Slovak National Party, was made vice-Chairman of the Party, and later became a principal advisor to the Minister of Privatization of the Slovak government (as a volunteer). After Mr. Mečiar's return to power in the fall of 1994, and a split in the Slovak National Party, among other things, Mr. Uhrík became disgusted with Slovak politics and returned to the United States.

⁶ *Kto je kto na Slovensku 1991?*, 190.

⁷ Jiri Pehe, "Slovak Nationalists Agitate for more Autonomy, Oppose Radical Privatization," *RFE/RL Research Report*, March 20, 1991; "50,000 rally after Slovak leader fired," *New York Times*, April 24, 1991, A9; For more details see Robert A. Young, *The Breakup of Czechoslovakia* (Kingston: Queen's University, Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, Research Paper #32, 1994), 5, 10-16.

of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, and it was Mr. Mečiar who proudly stood at the helm of the newly-independent Slovak Republic on January 1, 1993. Even though Mr. Mečiar was not initially a nationalist, he shrewdly perceived that Slovak nationalism was the strongest single force in post-Communist Czechoslovakia, and by 1992 he and his followers had firmly embraced this movement.⁸

Slovak nationalism, however, was not enough to save Mr. Mečiar from himself. He suffered his second major political defeat when the Slovak Parliament in February 1993 elected, not the physician Roman Kováč, the preferred candidate of Mr. Mečiar's party for President of the Republic, but rather the former Minister of Finance Michal Kováč.⁹ Much to Mr. Mečiar's surprise, the latter refused to become a mere figurehead and instead took his duties as President quite seriously, to the point of attacking Mr. Mečiar in the Slovak Parliament for alleged dictatorial tendencies in March of 1994. Meanwhile, Mr. Mečiar had lost the confidence of several of his key allies and supporters, including Milan Kňažko, his former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jozef Moravčík, the subsequent Minister of Foreign Affairs, and two Deputy Prime Ministers, including Roman Kováč and Ľudovít Černák, the latter

⁸ "Talks fail; Czechoslovakia close to breakup." *Ottawa Citizen*, June 9, 1992; "Leaders start negotiations on splitting Czechoslovakia," *The Globe and Mail*, June 17, 1992; "Who Split Czechoslovakia?" *The New York Times*, September 24, 1992, A29; "Parliament approves Czech-Slovak split," *The Globe and Mail*, November 26, 1992, "Fireworks, Tears and Doubt in Slovakia," *The New York Times*, January 1, 1993, A14; see also Sabrina Petra Ramet, "The Reemergence of Slovakia," *Nationalities Papers*, 22 (No. 1, Spring, 1994), 107-112.

⁹ "Havel elected first president of Czech Republic; Slovaks to hold runoff after vote rebuffs Prime Minister's candidate," *The Globe and Mail*, January 27, 1993, A6; "Ex-Communist Chosen President of Slovakia," *The New York Times*, February 16, 1993, A7.

his coalition partner from the Slovak National Party! The net result was a parliamentary vote of no-confidence in Mr. Mečiar and his party, his third political defeat, and his loss of power for a second time. Most of his former allies in the MDS, who abandoned him, joined Jozef Moravčík's centrist Democratic Union of Slovakia. From March to October of 1994, a left-right coalition headed by Prime Minister Jozef Moravčík ruled Slovakia.¹⁰

For these reasons, ever since his election victory of 1994, and his subsequent return to power, Mr. Mečiar has tried to topple the President of the Slovak Republic and to destroy the Democratic Union of Slovakia. Between October and December of 1994 Mr. Mečiar looked for coalition partners who would join him in his campaign against the President but had to settle for the two coalition partners mentioned above, who assured him of a voting majority in the Parliament, but not enough votes (90) to remove the President. Since he could not muster the votes to remove the President, he decided to try to strip him of some of his legal powers. For example, in April of 1995 Mr. Mečiar prevailed upon the Slovak Parliament to transfer from the President to the Prime Minister the right to appoint the Chief of Slovakia's Security Intelligence Service (the successor to the Secret Police).¹¹

¹⁰ "Broad Coalition to govern Slovakia," *The Globe and Mail*, March 15, 1994. For the viewpoints of the two protagonists regarding the reasons for their falling out see "Správa o stave Slovenskej republiky prednesená prezidentom SR Michalom Kováčom v Národnej rade SR dňa 8.3.1994" and "Prejav predsedu vlády Slovenskej republiky Vladimíra Mečiara na 27. schôdzi NR SR dňa 11.3.1994," published in a special issue of *Republika* (Bratislava, March, 19, 1994), 15pp. For a legal interpretation of this struggle see Spencer Zifčák, "The Battle over Presidential Power in Slovakia," *Slovakia*, 36 (1998), 70-80. For a profile of the Moravčík government and its policies see "CTK Profiles New Cabinet Members" in *FBIS*, March 17, 1994, 4-12 and "Text of Policy Statement of Slovak Government," *FBIS*, April 25, 1994, 16-30.

¹¹ "Je Lexa v NR SR, v SIS, alebo v lese?" *Sme* (Bratislava), April 26, 1995.

Meanwhile, Mr. Mečiar charged that the Democratic Union of Slovakia had not gathered the necessary 10,000 signatures before the elections of 1994. If he could prove his charge, then the DU members of Parliament would be stripped of their seats and Mr. Mečiar would by default have the three-fifths of the votes necessary to remove the President. Unfortunately for Mr. Mečiar, the Slovak Constitutional Court, headed by Milan Čič, the first Prime Minister of the post-communist Slovak Republic, and a former friend of Mr. Mečiar, upheld the validity of the 10,000 signatures obtained by the DU before the 1994 elections. This did not stop Mr. Mečiar from having his 80 supporters in Parliament pass a motion of "no confidence" in the President on May 5th, and in ordering the Slovak police to check on the validity of the 10,000 signatures by visiting the homes of the signatories, and in the process harassing supporters of the DU.¹²

Mr. Mečiar has also had his difficulties with the press. While he was out of office in 1994, the previous coalition government supported full freedom of the press, including radio and television, and appointed boards of directors who were likewise inclined. Very few of these individuals were supporters of Mr. Mečiar. Once he returned to power in December of 1994 (it took him over two months to put together a coalition), Mr. Mečiar began to fire the old boards of directors of radio and television (which are still state-controlled), and to replace them with his own people. These, in turn, cancelled certain satiric television programs which had made fun of Mr. Mečiar. As a result, there have been several mass-demonstrations in Bratislava against Mr. Mečiar's alleged attempts to control the mass-media. Therefore, while television and radio commentators have ceased to lampoon

¹² Zifčák, op.cit., p.70; "Overovanie podpisov na hárkoch DU je porušenie petičného práva občanov." *Sme*, May 23, 1995.

Mr. Mečiar, the print media, which is largely privatized, is still very critical of him.¹³

The economic situation in Slovakia, meanwhile, is improving. Slovakia did not slide into a deep depression after it became independent, as some Western pundits had predicted. Instead, after some uncertainty in 1993, its economy grew by a spectacular 4.8% in 1994 and its budget deficit was a respectable 3% of GDP. Meanwhile, the Slovak crown, its basic unit of currency, was devalued by only 10% in 1993, it is convertible to hard currencies, and it remains stable. The rate of inflation also dropped from 25% in 1993 to around 11.7% in 1994. Unemployment, however, remains high -14%. One of the causes of Slovak unemployment is the collapse of its heavy-arms industry, which used to serve the now-defunct Warsaw Pact and its allies world-wide. Converting this arms industry into something more useful remains a major challenge to the government of the Slovak Republic.¹⁴

¹³ Reuter, December 16, 1994, as reported by Martin Votruba in *Slovak News*, December 16-18, 1994; Jiří Pehe, "Anti-Mečiar Rally in Bratislava," *RFE/RL Reports*, *Ibid.*, December 8-11. In a TA SR report of May 12, 1995, Mr. Mečiar was quoted as saying that the press is free in Slovakia, "but all newspapers should admit who owns them, and who pays them," implying that the print press in Slovakia is largely financed by foreigners who are hostile to the current government. The CTK on the same date quoted Juraj Vereš, editor of *Národná obroda* (Bratislava), as agreeing that the Slovak press was still free, but that "the government is trying to gain control over the dailies." However, he added that lately "the government has been backing down." For Mr. Mečiar's earlier problems with the press see Jan Obrman, "The Slovak Government versus the Media," *RFE/RL Research Report*, February 5, 1993.

¹⁴ For an example of negative reporting on Slovakia's economic future see Stephen Engelberg, "New Nation, Imperiled Economy," *New York Times*, February 12, 1993, D1; for an admission that the Slovak economy is doing surprisingly well see "How the Slovaks Have Taken Flight," *The Globe and Mail*, December 5, 1994, A 10 (reprinted from the *Wall Street Journal*); and "Standard and Poors o Slovensku," *Sme*, April 7, 1995.

Indeed, converting the whole system from a command economy to a form of private enterprise remains the major problem for the Slovak government. Under Communism the state nationalized all the industry and the bulk of the land, it controlled all the means of production, it regulated prices, and subsidized housing, transportation and food, and created a complete welfare state with free education from pre-school through university, and free universal health-care. Unfortunately, the state enacted all these changes without the consent of the people, it enforced them through the use of police terror, and it discriminated in favour of members of the Communist Party and children of the working-class when dispensing economic and cultural benefits.¹⁵

Now that the Communists are no longer in charge, the various governments of Slovakia have tried to transform the economy into a form of private enterprise, as called for in the Constitution of the Slovak Republic. Since no real models exist on how to do this, numerous laws and regulations have been passed to try to bring it about. The first steps were taken in early 1991 when the Parliament of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic passed a law for the restitution of confiscated private property (chiefly land). While some former landowners were delighted to receive their land back, most young people in Slovakia showed no interest in working it. The amount of land seized from individual families by the Communists had been small in the first place, and most young

¹⁵ The literature on this subject is vast. For two concise articles that deal with most of this period see Robert K. Evanson, "Regime and Working Class in Czechoslovakia, 1948-1968," *Soviet Studies*, 37 (No. 2, 1985), 248-68; and by the same author "Political Repression in Czechoslovakia, 1948-1984," *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 28 (No.1, 1986), 1-21.

people have no intention of becoming smallholding peasants again.¹⁶

Managers, officials, and many workers on collective and state farms, on the other hand, wish to preserve these institutions. Since collectives and state farms provide their employees with a guaranteed income, regular hours, easy work, and many opportunities for theft, the employees are loath to see such farms disappear. Such employees are among the pillars of support that Mr. Mečiar can count on during elections.¹⁷

The various churches of Slovakia, meanwhile, especially the Roman and Greek Catholic Churches, which were singled out for persecution by the Communists, have had much of their confiscated property returned. In 1991-92 the federal government returned most of the buildings that the Communists had seized from religious orders, and in the fall of 1993 Mr. Mečiar's government returned most of the buildings that had been confiscated from Church Dioceses. However, most church land that was confiscated and turned into state or collective farms was not returned, largely because of the opposition of the collectives. Thus, the churches continue to rely upon government support for their existence, and

¹⁶ "Czechoslovakia plans to return property," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 24, 1991; "Transformácia poľnohospodárstva a reštitúcie," *Práca* (Bratislava), May 31, 1993; "Reforms Alter the Landscape of Czechoslovakia's Farming," *New York Times*, June 4, 1991; Milan Svec, "Czechoslovakia's Velvet Divorce," *Current History* (November, 1992), 377; and discussions with the two public servants mentioned above in footnote 3.

¹⁷ "Who voted for Whom?" (a poll conducted by the Slovak Research Office), as reported by Martin Votruba in *Slovak News*, 7-9 October, 1994, p.4. The observations about state farms and collectives were made by the two public servants mentioned above. On many occasions when I visited Slovakia in the era of Communism, I also discussed collectives and state farms with some of my relatives, who worked at such institutions. They detailed the many kinds of theft possible at state farms and collectives.

from a North American perspective, this is an unhealthy relationship.¹⁸

Meanwhile, the federal Parliament also passed the "small privatization" Act of 1990 concerning small business. This Act enabled a few thousand entrepreneurs to borrow money from banks to establish small retail businesses such as travel agencies, restaurants, bakeries, grocery stores, computer stores, and various skilled trades. These kinds of enterprises are flourishing all over Slovakia.¹⁹

A little later the federal Parliament passed another Act that concerned itself with the privatization of large industries, the so-called "large privatization." This would involve all except the most strategic industries such as atomic energy, natural gas, transportation, the arms industry and so on. However, since the government did not wish its large industries to be bought by foreigners, and since most of the citizens of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic did not have the wealth to purchase these industries outright, the government decided to enact a "coupon privatization." By this plan, every citizen over the age of 18 was entitled to buy a privatization coupon for 1,000 Czechoslovak crowns (Kčs), and then invest it in the company of his choice. The

¹⁸ For the story of the persecution of the churches in Slovakia see Theodor J. Zubek, *The Church of Silence in Slovakia* (Whiting, IN: John J. Lach, 1956), and Michal Lacko, "The Forced Liquidation of the Union of Užhorod," *Slovak Studies*, I (1961), 145-85; for the story of the underground church in Slovakia under Communism see "Secret Bishop," and for the story of the rebuilding of the Jesuit Order see "New Opportunities in Slovakia," *Company: a magazine of the American Jesuits*, 8 (No. 3, Spring, 1991), 2-5, and 9-11. Details of the restitution laws passed after 1990 can be found in Sharon Fisher, "Church Restitution Law Passed in Slovakia," *RFE/RL Research Report*, November 19, 1993.

¹⁹ "Chystáme historický zákon: Ekonomická reforma konečně dostala tvář," *Národní obroda*, September 5, 1990, 13; Svec, op.cit., 377.

number of shares he would receive would depend upon the value of the company. This was the first step in the creation of a stock market in the Republic. The government also decided that this process would be divided into several rounds since it involved so many industries. The first round took place while the Czechoslovak Federation still existed.²⁰

The second round of the coupon privatization was supposed to take place after Slovakia became independent. However, the government of Mr. Mečiar soon discovered that most Slovaks were not investing their coupons directly into the companies for sale, but rather were selling them to investment companies controlled by foreigners. The Mečiar government did not want to allow these foreign-owned holding companies to buy up so much of Slovakia's industries, and it postponed this privatization. However, the Moravčík government, which ruled Slovakia between March and October, 1994, allowed this privatization to continue. Then, when Mr. Mečiar returned to power in the fall of 1994, he halted the privatization again. At the end of March, 1995 the government of Mr. Mečiar decided to allow half of this coupon privatization to proceed, but he reserved the other half for potential Slovak buyers, most of whom are in fact the managers of these industries. These managers allegedly neglected the upkeep of their factories and, therefore, their value has declined. Thus, if this privatization continues, the managers of these factories stand to make a lot of money once the value of their factories goes up again. Mr. Mečiar's enemies have charged that these managers are in league with Mr. Mečiar, that they are all former Communists, and that they provide him with financial support. Mr. Mečiar's supporters, on the other hand, charge that the proponents of the

²⁰ "A Divorce that Could Save the Czech Economy," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 11, 1991; Svec, op. cit., 377.

strict coupon privatization are in league with Mr. Moravčík and financially support the opposition parties. Neutral observers have told me that both sides are guilty of profiteering from this privatization process, and the greed and corruption involved goes a long way towards explaining the bitterness of current Slovak politics. Also, because Mr. Mečiar reduced the number of businesses to be privatized in half, that is, from an estimated value of 80 billion Sk to 40 billion Sk, the 3.2 million holders of privatization coupons in the Slovak Republic witnessed a drop in the value of their coupons from 24,000 Sk to 12,000 Sk by March of 1995. Forty deputies of the Slovak Parliament then approached the Constitutional Court in Košice to protest against Law No. 340/1994, which had halted the coupon privatization on November 3-4, 1994, and the Constitutional Court decided in their favour. It then ordered the Slovak Parliament to re-write the law so that it would not violate individuals' rights to private property as guaranteed by the Slovak Constitution. Mr. Mečiar's reaction was to propose that the privatization coupons be exchanged for government bonds, which could be redeemed for 10,000 Sk, or held for their interest, or used to purchase shares in companies. Most opposition deputies denounced this suggestion as "theft" from the coupon-holders.²¹

The average citizen, meanwhile, has had to tighten his belt several notches since the fall of Communism. While the government still controls the price of electricity, transportation, fuel and basic

²¹ *Sme*, April 6, 1995; "Privatizačný zákon nie je v súlade s ústavou SR," TA SR, May 25, 1995; "V. Mečiar o novej kuponovej privatizácii," *Sme*, June 8, 1995; "Anketa *Sme*," *Sme*, June 8, 1995. Once again, the two public servants, cited above, explained the complexity of this issue to me. Dr. Juraj Švec, the Rector of Comenius University in Bratislava, and a member of Parliament for the DU, confirmed their analysis when he visited with me on March 26, 1995.

foodstuffs, it has decided to provide smaller subsidies for these goods or services and, therefore, it has raised their prices dramatically in the last four years. Thus, while a streetcar ride used to cost a mere one crown, it now costs five; while gasoline used to cost seven crowns a litre, it now costs nineteen. And, while a liter of milk used to cost two crowns, it now costs twelve.²²

Wages, of state employees, on the other hand, have not kept up with the rise in prices. While members of the Slovak Parliament voted themselves hefty pay increases in the summer of 1993 (from 10,000 Sk to 25,000 Sk per month), ordinary state employees do not share in this largesse. Indeed, the wage-structure of state employees is still very Communist. Thus, a physician starting his career receives only 4,000 Sk, which is less than the wage of the average truck-driver! As a result, physicians in Slovakia recently demanded a 200% wage increase, and threatened to go on strike if they did not receive it. Teachers and professors are similarly underpaid, with the former receiving 5,000 Sk and the latter 8,600 Sk. Even though Mr. Mečiar promised during the last election campaign, among other things, to double teachers' salaries,

²² Interviews with the the two public servants cited above, plus my own observations on visits to Slovakia in the summers of 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1994. In May of 1990 I visited Slovakia as a delegate of the Slovak League of America, which had come on a "fact-finding" mission. This was an official mission, sponsored by the government of the Slovak Republic. It was the first official visit of the Slovak League since 1938, when the first delegation of the League brought to Slovakia the original of the Pittsburgh Agreement. In 1993 I visited Slovakia as the newly-elected president of the Canadian Slovak League. In this capacity I had official discussions with Prime Minister Mečiar and with Ján Findra, Chancellor to the President. My visits in 1991, 1992 and 1994 were for scholarly purposes - to participate in historical conferences.

he has thus far failed to do so. Indeed, Slovak schoolteachers are also threatening to go on strike over this issue.²³

Employees of the growing private enterprises, on the other hand, generally make much more than state employees. For instance, clerks in private banks earn 10,000-15,000 crowns a month. Accountants and computer programmers in private firms make up to 20,000 Sk per month. And attorneys, who were among the first to privatize in the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, are among the highest-paid professionals in Slovakia. Finally, growing numbers of entrepreneurs have become millionaires many times over, and some of these 'nouveau-riche' flaunt their wealth with expensive western cars, clothes, and other consumer goods. They have provoked increasing resentment among state employees, whose salaries have remained far behind the increase in the cost of consumer goods and services.²⁴

The price of housing has also skyrocketed. Under Communism, if one had the right connections, one could obtain a beautiful villa in the hills overlooking Bratislava and the Danube river officially for about 250,000 Kčs (and unofficially, that is, with an additional under-the-table payment of 250,000 Kčs). Now these villas cost anywhere from 2,000,000 to 20,000,000 Sk. Similarly, state and co-op apartments, which usually consist of only three rooms plus a small kitchen and tiny bath, are commanding premium prices. The co-op apartments, where one purchased the

²³ *Sme*, April 6, 1995; "Prieskum ukázal, že vyše 70% lekárov je ochotných vstúpiť do štrajku," *Sme*, April 26, 1995; "Školstvo dostane 530 miliónov," *Sme*, May 14, 1995; "Ultimátum lekárov na zvýšenie platov o 200% vypršalo, štrajkovať sa asi nebude," *Sme*, May 15, 1995; "Priemerná mzda v školstve naďalej nejasná," *Sme*, June 8, 1995; and discussions with the two public servants cited above.

²⁴ Discussions with the two public servants cited above, plus personal observations from past visits to Slovakia.

right to live for 30,000 Kčs under Communism, can now be bought by the renters for 50,000 Sk, and can then be re-sold for anywhere between 750,000 to 1,000,000 Sk! Former state-owned apartments, meanwhile, which until recently could not be purchased were often sub-leased to others for very high rents. The process of their sale will soon approximate what happened with the co-op apartments. The state, meanwhile, has lost interest in providing additional housing for the people. Various entrepreneurs have taken over this task, and the newly-built apartments generally sell for around 1,000,000 Sk, which is far beyond what the average Slovak can afford.²⁵

Health care, meanwhile, is also in a state of transition. Before 1989, health care was universal and free. However, one received quality care only if one was either a high functionary of the Communist Party, which had its own special clinics and hospitals, with modern, western, equipment; or, if one bribed one's physician and nurse with extra money or gifts. And, exotic western drugs were usually not available, except to the privileged few. Many American and Canadian Slovaks remember well the plaintive letters that they used to receive from their unfortunate relatives in Slovakia under Communism, and how these relatives sent prescriptions for Western-made drugs, along with the addresses of pharmacies in Switzerland, which when paid in hard currencies, were willing to fill these orders for them.²⁶

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Milada Vachudova and Sharon Fisher, "Health Care Crisis: The Czech and Slovak Republics," *RFE/RL Research Report*, October 8, 1993, 44-46; and discussions with friends and relatives on visits to Slovakia in 1968, 1970, 1983 and 1988. Our family in Canada used to regularly receive requests for western drugs, and we filled these requests through a willing pharmacist in Switzerland. Dr. Dobroslav Valik of Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, told me in October of 1992 of having tried to establish a Dental Clinic in Bratislava right after the "Velvet

In an effort to save money, the Slovak government is trying to privatize parts of the health-care system, but at a very slow pace. Pharmacies have all been privatized and one can now buy whatever drugs one needs. However, the state pays only for routine drugs, and not always for the full amount. The more exotic drugs, which are now readily available, must be paid for by the patient. Dentists are also privatizing as quickly as they can, with about one-third currently being self-supporting and expensive. Most physicians, however, have not yet taken the plunge and are unlikely to do so. Because of their poor salaries, most M.D.'s in Slovakia cannot afford to purchase the expensive equipment necessary to open an office or clinic, and they also cannot afford private liability insurance. As long as they continue to work for state-run hospitals, they do not need liability insurance, and, thus, they continue to be state employees. And, because they continue to be underpaid, many demand extra payments or gifts if they are to provide quality care. Meanwhile, most Slovaks oppose the privatization of their health care. They want it to remain universal and free. Thus, the Mečiar government is moving slowly and cautiously in trying to reform the health-care system.²⁷

The educational system of Slovakia is also undergoing change. Shortly after the Communists seized power they abolished all religious schools and put education at the service of the state. The whole system from pre-school through university was then state-funded and controlled. Marxism was taught as the philosophy of

Revolution" of 1989. Much to his amazement, his friends from the VPN showed him the clinic for former members of the Communist Party in Bratislava. It had all the latest western equipment one could imagine, unlike clinics for the general public.

²⁷ Vaduchova & Fisher, *op. cit.*, 48-49, and discussions with the two public servants cited above.

the state, and all teachers had to conform or face expulsion. Higher education was free but operated under a quota system whereby in the process of admission children of the working-class were favoured over those of the middle or upper classes. The latter then resorted to bribery to get their children into institutions of higher learning. Meanwhile, to their credit, the Communists also established several new universities, including the full-service Šafárik University in Košice and the College of Transportation in Žilina, among others, to satisfy the demands of an increasingly industrialized society.²⁸

After the downfall of Communism, state-support for education continued, but not its ideological requirements. Most universities held new elections for rectors and deans, and the professors and students threw out the communist administrators. However, because most of the communist professors have tenure, the universities cannot get rid of them. It will take another generation before these Marxist professors reach retirement age, and are finally replaced by a new generation of professors. And even the new generation will be hard to find, because the wages paid to professors are so low. Meanwhile, the quota system that favored students of working-class origins has been replaced by a quota

²⁸ Ladislav Grešík, "Výchova vysokoškolskej inteligencie na Slovensku v rokoch 1956-1960," *Historický časopis*, 31 (No.6, 1983), 891-910; Anton Hrnko & Jozef Žatkuliak, "Univerzita Komenského na rozhraní päťdesiatych a šesťdesiatych rokov," *Historický časopis*, 32 (No.4, 1984), 593-619; personal observations from past visits to Slovakia, discussions with the two public servants cited above, and discussion with Rudolf Korec, Rector of Šafárik University, May, 1990. On a visit to Slovakia in the summer of 1968 I asked one of my cousins what he was studying. He replied "Philosophy." When I inquired about the kind of philosophy, he replied "Marxism-Leninism!" His mother, meanwhile, who was a schoolteacher, used to go to church in a village outside of the town in which she lived, because if she had been seen attending church services in her home town, she would have lost her job.

based on grades. Even though Slovakia today has 14 institutions of higher learning, including brand-new universities in Trnava and Banská Bystrica, it still enrolls only 18% of high school graduates, which is very low when compared to Western Europe or North America, which attract between 30% and 50%. Meanwhile, the state has permitted the re-establishment of religious schools funded by the government. However, their number remains small because forty years of Communism thoroughly discredited religious education, and most employees of the Ministry of Education are still opposed to their expansion.²⁹

Whether or not the government decides to invest more in higher education remains to be seen. Recent attempts to introduce tuition to cover 20% of the cost of their education have met fierce resistance from the students. Meanwhile, the quality of university education in Slovakia is not very high, largely because the teaching staff was cut off from the West for over 40 years, and also because universities stressed education rather than research. That is why all the Slovak universities are hurriedly signing agreements with universities all over the Western world that provide for scholarly exchanges of staff and students. However, it is difficult to attract top Western scholars to teach at Slovak universities when they can expect salaries of only \$300.00 per month. Only true idealists have thus far volunteered to teach at Slovak universities under such conditions.³⁰

²⁹ Discussion with Rudolf Korec, Rector of Šafárik University in Košice, May, 1990; discussion with Dean Ladislav Paulíny, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University, May, 1994; discussion with Juraj Švec, Rector of Comenius University, March 26, 1995; and discussions with the two public servants cited above.

³⁰ Discussion with Juraj Švec, *op.cit.*, and "Podľa prof. M. Urbana, dostávajú vysoké školy v SR iba tretinu financií v porovnaní s vyspelými štátmi," TA SR, May 26, 1995.

Slovak culture, meanwhile, is also undergoing a radical transformation. Under Communism all cultural activities were state-financed and controlled, and all cultural output was for the sake of promoting Marxism. A Slovak Academy of Sciences, as well as Unions of writers and creative artists were founded in the early 1950's, and they operated under five-year plans. Compliant historians, writers, and creative artists not only became state employees with respectable salaries, but they also received such perks as the use of confiscated castles for meetings and vacations, and state-subsidized clubs that served good food at very low prices. As long as they toed the Party line, their books were published or their paintings and illustrations were bought by museums or publishing houses, and no-one worried, for instance, about how many copies of a book were actually sold, since the government subsidized everything. On the other hand, historians, writers and creative artists could only praise Communism and denounce Capitalism. Certain key personages in Slovak history, such as the Rev. Andrej Hlinka, founder and leader of the Slovak People's Party in the first third of the twentieth century, either became "non-persons" in official publications, or else were denounced as reactionary clerico-fascists. The past was deliberately distorted to serve the communist future. Those intellectuals who refused to go along with this system were persecuted by being allowed to work only at menial labour, and those who dared to openly oppose this Marxist control over culture ended up in jail.³¹

³¹ Július Mésároš, "Reflexie o päťdesiatych a šesťdesiatych rokoch," *Historický časopis*, 39 (Nos. 4-5, 1991), 379-88; Richard Marsina, "Slovenská historiografia 1945-1990," *Historický časopis*, 39 (Nos.4-5, 1991), 370-79; and discussions with Slovak historians and writers during my visits to Slovakia between 1968 and 1994.

After the collapse of Communism, most Slovak intellectuals threw off the shackles of Marxism and started to create freely, as in other countries. Freedom, however, came with a price - declining government support. The bloated Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAV) has been reduced from 7,000 members in 1989 to 3,000 in 1995. While some people have been advocating its total abolition, others have come to its defense. In recent days, certain members of Mr. Mečiar's government have even advocated that the Academy be retained in its present form, and that it continue to do basic research as before, while leaving university professors to do the teaching. This Soviet model runs contrary to western traditions, whereby university professors do both research and teaching, and government-supported research is kept to a minimum. Rectors of Slovakia's universities wish to adopt the western model and are currently negotiating with the Mečiar government to try to reach a compromise on this very touchy question.³²

Slovakia's writers, meanwhile, have had to learn to fend for themselves. Some have become entrepreneurs in the publishing industry, which has shrunk in size and has become more selective in what it accepts for publication, based upon its market potential; others have entered politics and the diplomatic service, giving these professions an unusual (in North America, at least) intellectual flair; and a third group is now dependent upon government grants to subsidize its publications. Needless to say, the compe-

³² "Z prejavu predsedu SAV Branislava Lichardusa na slávnostnom zhromaždení k 40. výročiu SAV", *Správy slovenskej akadémie vied*, 30 (No.1, 1994), 3-5; discussion with Dr. Juraj Švec, Rector of Comenius University, March 26, 1995; and discussion with Dr. Branislav Lichardus, president of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to the United States, April 22, 1995, in Washington, D.C.

tition for such grants is very fierce, with only the best writers receiving support. No wonder that Slovak writers jealously guard their perks and get very indignant when reminded that the government will not for long let them keep their castle at Budmerice, especially if some wealthy westerner offers to buy it for a large sum of money.³³

Slovak writers also face fierce competition from western writers. Bookstores are full of novels by westerners, especially Americans such as Stephen King (in translation), and only outstanding Slovak novels now have any chance of commercial success. This also applies to children's books, especially those published by the Walt Disney Corporation. Traditional Slovak children's books, illustrated by Slovak graphic artists, now have to compete for the hearts and minds of Slovak children with Walt Disney characters such as Bambi and Mowgli speaking in Slovak! Unfortunately, Slovak writers also have to compete with the whole world of pornography, which is also a specialty of the West. Newspaper Kiosks in Bratislava feature as many naked women on magazine covers as one can see in Western Europe. This is another kind of price that one pays for freedom.³⁴

The Slovak media is also undergoing rapid change. The Slovak film industry (Koliba studios), which used to produce ten

³³ Discussions with the two public servants cited above. When I visited Slovakia in the summer of 1992, I tormented writer Ľuboš Jurík with the suggestion that he would soon lose his summer retreat at Budmerice castle when some "rich Arab sheik would offer \$50,000,000 for it." Jurík, who now works as the official spokesman for Dr. Ivan Gašparovič, the Speaker of the Slovak Parliament, became indignant at my suggestion. Meanwhile, the writer Anton Hykisch now serves as Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to Canada.

³⁴ Personal observations based upon my visits to Slovakia in 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994. The semi-monthly *Knižná revue* (Bratislava), now regularly features reviews of books published in the major western languages.

fairly high-quality feature films per year with government subsidies in the past, now struggles to produce one a year. This industry, too, has to compete with the West, especially with Hollywood, and no country has yet succeeded in doing this. Thus, if the Slovak government wishes its film industry to continue to exist, it will have to continue to subsidize it.³⁵

Slovak television, meanwhile, is in the throes of a great controversy. Only two Slovak television stations exist at the moment, and both are government-funded and controlled. As mentioned above, Mr. Mečiar recently dismissed the Boards of Directors of both stations and replaced them with his own people, and many intellectuals have accused him of trying to control the electronic media. These intellectuals seem to have forgotten the folk-saying "he who pays the piper, calls the tune." The only solution that I see to this dilemma is for Slovak entrepreneurs to establish private television stations, either in Slovakia, or, if necessary, in neighbouring Austria or the Czech lands, which will compete for the hearts and minds of their audiences, the same way that private television stations do in the West. Meanwhile, cheap films and programs from all over the world, either dubbed or licensed in Slovakia, now dominate the air-waves.³⁶

The Slovak print media, by contrast, is vibrant and free. Under Communism all media, whether print or electronic, had to

³⁵ Celestine Bohlen, "East Europe's Cultural Life, Once a Refuge, Now Eclipsed," *New York Times*, November 13, 1990, A1, A12; discussions with the public servants cited above; personal observations based upon my visits to Slovakia.

³⁶ See above, footnote 12, for the dismissal of the directors of Slovak radio and television. Interestingly enough, on April 22, 1995, the first private cable network began to broadcast in Slovakia. It is called "Vaša televízia" (Your Television), or VTV, and at the moment covers only the Bratislava area, although it soon hopes to expand across the country. Cf. *Sme*, April 24, 1995.

parrot the Party line. In order to discover what was really going on, people had to learn to "read between the lines." Clever journalists often sent subtle signals to their readers by, for instance, not mentioning some prominent Party functionaries in a story, which meant that they were falling into disfavour, or else by lavishing praise upon them, which meant that they were about to be promoted. Not any more. Slovakia has about a dozen nationwide independent dailies, and only one - *Slovenská republika* - supports the Mečiar government. The rest are generally critical of the government, with *Národná obroda* being the most objective, while *Sme*, which is edited by former members of the Public Against Violence, is the most critical. Unfortunately, the government still controls the supply and price of newsprint, and recently threatened, through taxes, to raise the price by 100% if the criticism of Mr. Mečiar did not stop. Ten independent dailies responded by issuing newspapers with blank front pages, and the government backed off. Nevertheless, this game of "chicken" between Mr. Mečiar, and Slovakia's independent press continues.³⁷

In spite of all the difficulties it faces, Slovakia is well on its way towards democratic Capitalism. Mr. Mečiar's "Type 'A' "personality notwithstanding, Slovakia is a functioning democracy with a democratically-elected Parliament and President. And by signing a historic treaty with Hungary on March 19th, in which he promised that Slovakia would guarantee the cultural and

³⁷ For the implications of the switch from a government-controlled press to one that is free see Owen V. Johnson, "Half Slave - Half Free: The Crisis of the Russian and East European Press," *AAASS Newsletter*, 33 (March, 1993), 1, 4. The opinion regarding the objectivity of various Slovak newspapers is mine. For details regarding the recent struggle between Mr. Mečiar and the Slovak press see "Slovak Press Special," *Slovak News* (U. of Pittsburgh), March 3-5, 1995. For the reaction of America's most important daily to this struggle see "Slovakia Takes a Wrong Turn," *New York Times*, March 7, 1995, A18.

linguistic rights of its Hungarian citizens, Mr. Mečiar showed that he is capable of compromise, and he can, if he is so inclined, behave as a pan-European politician. The Members of Parliament, and government Ministers, however, still have to learn the political culture of democracy--to treat each other with respect, and to serve the people, not just their own interests. This will take time, however, and we should be patient while it does. After all, some of our own politicians need to learn the same lesson.³⁸

It should be apparent, therefore, that the most difficult part of the transition from Communism to Capitalism is in the realm of individual versus collective rights. After the overthrow of the Communists in 1989 most Slovaks were delighted to recover their individual rights, such as the freedom of expression, the freedom to travel to the West, and so on. However, with the increase in the cost of living that has occurred in the last four years, these rights have lost some of their lustre. Instead, many people are growing increasingly restive about their collective rights, that is, to free and universal health care, to free education, and to a whole host of previously free social programs which Communism inaugurated. It was Mr. Mečiar's promises in the last elections to guarantee some of these social programs that, along with his strong nationalism, brought him the largest number of votes. How he will manage to retain these expensive social programs, and at the same time reform the economy and make it more market-oriented, remains to be seen. Indeed, many western countries share Mr.

³⁸ For a grudging acknowledgement that Slovakia is a functioning democracy see "2-Year-Old Slovakia Toddling Toward Democracy," *New York Times*, March 19, 1995, A3. For the treaty with Hungary see Sharon Fisher "Slovakia and Hungary Sign Bilateral Treaty," OMRI, Inc., as cited in *Slovak News*, March 19, 1995.

Mečiar's dilemma - how to promote capitalist growth while subsidizing expensive social programs.

REVIEWS

Stephen L. Crane, *Survivor From An Unknown War: The Life of Isakjan Narzikul*. Upland, PA.: Diane Publishing, 1999, 333pp.

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One of the most fundamental dilemmas confronting politically conscious individuals in East Central Europe during World War II was that of choosing between two evils: Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. For the peoples of Soviet Central Asia, the choice was deceptively simple. They had never suffered under German domination, whereas Stalin's regime had abolished many aspects of their traditional way of life. Consequently, a Turkistani battalion served as part of the German Army and later the Nazi SS. The experiences of a Turkistani officer, Isakjan Narzikul, is the subject of the present work.

Isakjan Narzikul's boyhood offered every indication he would become a model Soviet citizen. Notwithstanding the Communist doctrine of international solidarity, at the military academy of Tashkent (predominately Russian in composition), Isakjan was treated as a member of a despised, dark-skinned minority. Yet he performed well, and was commissioned a lieutenant in the Red Army. During the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, Isakjan was stationed in the Baltic territories, where he was captured.

At this time a number of German military officers broke with Nazi racial ideology. They felt that, in order for Germany to win the war in the East, it was necessary to rally the Soviet peoples in a popular struggle against the Stalinist Soviet Union. Among the

various organizations sponsored in Berlin was the National Turkistani Unity Committee. Isakjan Narzikul became an adherent, and subsequently an officer in the Turkistani battalion. This unit admitted and concealed the religious identity of Turkistan's Jewish co-nationals. Ironically, then, under Turkistani auspices, Jews served in the SS.

The Turkistanis aided the Germans in the suppression of the Warsaw uprising in the summer of 1944. They conducted themselves with far less brutality towards the civilians than did the Germans, although they were not averse to a certain amount of looting. From there they were transferred to Slovakia. The author did not mention that Slovakia experienced a full-fledged uprising in the autumn of 1944; he merely stated that the area was characterized by "partisan activity." The Slovak National Uprising was formally crushed when the Germans captured the rebel center of Banská Bystrica late in October. The Turkistanis did not arrive until December. Given the loot that they had acquired in Warsaw, and Slovakia's relative prosperity, it was initially an idyllic intervention.

Isakjan's life underwent a dramatic change when his superior officer (who had a Russian partisan girlfriend) decided to change sides once again. Only a few officers, including Isakjan, were consulted; the rank and file were shanghaied into the partisan movement. The Soviet officer who received them gave them the name Chapajev group. It is worth noting here that a Chapajev Brigade of partisans had previously been outstandingly active in the Slovak uprising.

The Turkistani group was largely decimated in a German ambush; Isakjan gathered together the survivors. He commanded a curious group of partisans, whose objectives did not include

destroying railways, cutting communication wires, or ambushing German troops. Isakjan was concerned that its members simply survive. Eventually, they returned fire when the Germans fired upon them. But Isakjan's most noteworthy accomplishment was winning the goodwill of the Slovak people. He maintained strict discipline over his unit in the village it occupied, punished an attempted rape, and was scrupulous in matters of requisition. Ultimately, he married a Slovak woman and overcame the distrust of his future father-in-law.

After the war Isakjan became a Czechoslovak citizen. He was popular with the local Slovaks, who helped thwart Soviet efforts to deport him back to Turkistan. Eventually, however, Isakjan had to flee Czechoslovakia. He ultimately made his way to Philadelphia, where he worked hard and experienced a measure of success. He came to the attention of a local doctor, whose nephew, Stephen Crane, authored the present work.

Survivor from an Unknown War suffers from several weaknesses. Crane is not a professional historian. He repeatedly refers to the Soviet intelligence/secret police apparatus as the KGB. During World War II, Soviet state security was referred to as the NKVD; KGB was not adopted as an acronym until 1964. The book's index is virtually worthless, having numerous inaccuracies in page citations. In at least one instance it refers the reader to a blank page! Finally, when compared with other foreign groups which participated in the Slovak uprising (Frenchmen, Yugoslavs, Russians and Ukrainians) and non-Slovak native groups (Jews and Roma), the participation of the Turkistanis was at best peripheral.

None of this, however, detracts from Crane's poignant portrayal of a man who maintained his moral integrity under extremely adverse circumstances. The book also reflects favourably on the

Slovak people's sense of fair-play and hospitality during a particularly painful period in their history.

Konstantin V. Lifanov, *Jazyk duxovnoj literatury slovackich katolikov 16-18 vv. i kodifikacija A. Bernolaka*. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 2000, 118pp.

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During the early years of communism in the 1950's, Slovak linguists — agreeing with their former Czech professors — wrote that literary Slovak was first codified in the 1780s by Anton Bernolák, a priest and *zeman* (lower nobleman) from Orava County. According to them, the written norm before Bernolák had been literary Czech, with varying degrees of regional Slovak influences. While insightful works about the development of the Slovak language as such had already been published by then, only limited research into its written norms prior to Bernolák was actually carried out earlier, or after that, and the assertions from the 1950s have been repeated since. Detailed analyses of the norms and standards did not reappear until the 1990s. Interestingly, they were done by linguists outside Slovakia: Ľubomír Ďurovič at the University of Lund, Sweden; Mark Lauersdorf at Luther University, Iowa; and Konstantin Lifanov, at the M. V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russia.

In February of 2001 Moscow University published Lifanov's book on the language of Slovak Catholic ecclesiastical literature from the 16th through the 18th centuries. During two decades of

research in Slovak archives and libraries, Lifanov analyzed both printed and written texts that originated before Bernolák. Lifanov concluded that, contrary to earlier assumptions, Slovak authors have used a written standard separate from the written standard of Prague since the 16th century.

The Kingdom of Bohemia, with its large Czech population, was part of the Holy Roman Empire, and as such was among the first areas in Central Europe to pick up on new trends from the West, including writing in the local vernacular instead of in Latin. The written standard that developed in Prague served as an influential model in the establishment of Polish writing, and was adopted outright by the Slovaks in the Kingdom of Hungary to the east of Bohemia in the 14th century. At that time Czech was closer to Slovak than it is now.

However, prompted by the spread of Luther's reforms in the Kingdom of Hungary after the 1530s, the need to publish in the vernacular, rather than in Latin, grew and ongoing changes in the Czech written standard gradually ceased to be picked up by Slovak writers. They began to rely on their own traditions, first in religious writing, and later in administrative texts as well. The changes in the written standard involved both a retention of grammatical features originally adopted from Czech, which had become obsolete in the written standard of Prague, and an establishment of Slovak features in many instances where the two languages differed.

By the 1610s a systematic written standard was in place in Slovakia, which was never used in Moravia or Bohemia. It was respected by authors regardless of their religious affiliation — Catholic, or Lutheran. While Slovak linguists in the 1950s said that their written language had been subdivided into western, central and eastern varieties, Lifanov demonstrated that Slovak

authors in the Kingdom of Hungary respected a single literary standard, which mainly relied on western Slovak features.

According to Lifanov, Bernolák's "manual of style" from the 1780s was not a new standardization, but a description and adjustment of the Slovak written standard that had been in place since the early 17th century. Only the Lutheran ecclesiastical writing and poetry (but not many of their other texts) took a different path during the counter-Reformation, when their persecution peaked. But the Lutherans did not use the contemporary Prague written standard either. Rather, they reverted to the archaic style of a Protestant translation of the Bible published in Moravia in the 1590s, whose language had already been obsolete for one or two centuries at the time of its publication. During empress Maria Theresa's reign in the 18th century, the close adherence to the language of that translation of the Bible in their 'high literature' became an article of faith and religious survival for the Lutherans. Tradition made their descendants partial to the obsolete style for several decades after emperor Joseph II's Edict of Toleration of 1781.

Czech and Slovak linguists in the 20th century generally reviewed only old high literature, and high literature was mostly written by the Lutheran intelligentsia. Moreover, Slovak and Czech have many common features, and the academics — first Czech and later their Slovak disciples — took all the features that did not differ from Czech to be Czech, including in the vast number of instances when the features were the same in Slovak. To illustrate the approach in a theoretical example, if the features in a text were one-third Czech, one-third the same in Czech and Slovak, and one-third Slovak, the whole text would be seen as two-thirds, i.e. "in principle" Czech, rather than as two-thirds

Slovak, or as open to both interpretations and subject to further analysis. Yet another reason for misidentification was that, by comparison to modern Slovak, west Slovak features, which used to be the main source of the Slovak written standard, are often closer to Czech. That increased the likelihood that 20th-century linguists, not familiar with regional varieties of Slovak, dismissive of the possibility of their employment in the old written standard, or not sufficiently thorough, would not take account of them.

It is worth noting that, although his research may not converge with Lifanov's, Ďurovič showed in a recent paper that there indeed was a concept of a written standard before Bernolák's manual of style. Bernolák drew on a grammar book published in Bratislava in the 1740s by Lutheran Pastor Pavel Doležal, who chastised his contemporaries for writing in their 18th-century language instead of using the archaic Biblical style.

According to Lifanov, the pre-existing Slovak written standard was established so well that even those who welcomed Bernolák's manual of style often just appeared to respect it where Bernolák's codification agreed with the existing norm, but adhered to the traditional standard where Bernolák diverged from it.

To sum up, Lifanov's research shows that the Slovaks adopted their written norm from Prague in the 14th century. Slovak and Czech writing bifurcated after the 1530s, when the Slovaks began to ignore ongoing changes in Prague, and introduced Slovak innovations. A Slovak written standard had developed by the 1610s. Except for a reversal to an archaic style limited to high literature by Lutheran authors in the 18th and early 19th centuries, that written standard was used through its major reform by Ľudovít Štúr in the middle of the 19th century.

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